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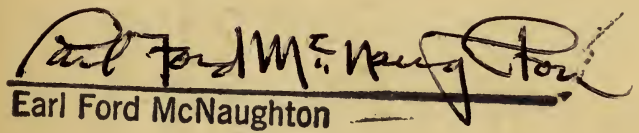

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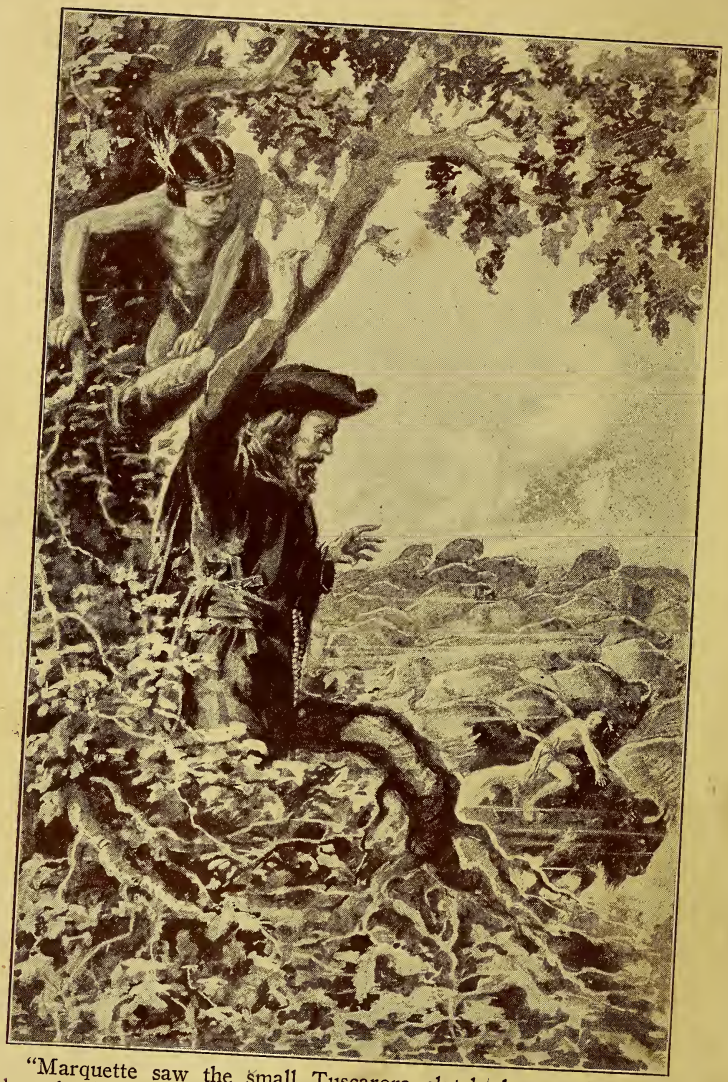

"Marquette saw the small Tuscarora clutch desperately at a branch of a tree nearer the edge of the ravine. Then a dust cloud rolled up."

(*Page* 166.)

MISSISSIPPI'S BLACKROBE

A STORY OF FATHER MARQUETTE

BY

NEIL BOYTON, S. J.

Author of "In God's Country," "Mangled Hands," etc.

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NEW YORK, CINCINNATI, CHICAGO

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TO

THE INSPIRING MEMORY

OF

OUR MID-AMERICAN APOSTLE,

FATHER JAMES MARQUETTE, S. J.

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MISSISSIPPI'S BLACKROBE

CHAPTER I

NO FLESH

DOWN that broad, undiscovered river which was to be known as the Wisconsin, two canoes crept. They carried seven white men. Five of these bronzed paddlers wore the fringed coats and skin trousers, the pudding-bag caps and gay red sashes that proclaimed the woodsmen. But he who plied the bow paddle of the first canoe was dressed differently. The faded black gown that covered his lean figure was frayed. Long and dark brown was the hair that the wide-brimmed hat hid. He did not look his thirty-six years. At his girdle hung the crucifix of his Saviour. And with every dip of his paddle, the breviary, suspended by a cord from his neck, swayed and threatened to pitch into the quiet waters.

A smile of expectancy lit up this Blackrobe's features as the canoe breasted the next pine-wooded point. This smile faded away as another stretch of the unknown river unfolded before his gaze. He called over his shoulder: "Still the Great Water eludes us, Louis."

The man in blanket coat and jaunty cap of beaver,

whom he addressed, ceased his exertions, while the gentle current carried the canoe onward.

"I never believed half the old-squaws' tales those Fox and Mascouten Indians told us. It is a month since we left the beach at Mackinac. We have already come weary leagues beyond our calculations and always, good Father Marquette, this river opens up another stretch. It seems ——"

The Blackrobe interrupted the man. Undaunted certainty shone in his eyes.

"Louis—Louis Joliet! Where is your faith! Neither of us must lose sight of our purpose on this voyage into the unknown. You paddle towards the South Sea to seek new nations of these red children and win them for the King. I, to teach them to know our great God, of Whom they have hitherto been pitifully ignorant. Neither of us shall fail, with Mary Immaculate's aid."

There came into James Marquette's countenance the tender expression of one who has heard a well-beloved name.

"And I'll be satisfied," mumbled the stern paddler in that canoe, "if I ever see the Mission at Mackinac again, with this still attached to my scalp." He touched affectionately the long black hair that curled out under his beaver-skin cap.

"Ah, Jean, I heard that," cried Father Marquette gayly. "Never fear; those precious locks of yours will grow to turn white."

"It's a wonder they haven't yet, my Father," retorted the woodsman, and he grinned.

Again the three took up their paddles and Joliet signaled the four woodsmen in the second canoe that

he was crossing the current towards the other still shore.

The look of filial devotion that Mary Immaculate's name had kindled in Marquette's eyes yet lingered, and his thoughts, as he plied his paddle, turned back to that last Mass he had said a month ago in the little birchbark chapel of the Mission of Saint Ignace when this expedition had started to seek the Great Water.

The Blackrobe murmured again the petition he had begged that May morning of 1673.

"You know, Mary Immaculate, I do not seek the Great Water for fame. I desire that honor to be yours. But I do wish to bring those other sheep, who live along its banks, into your Son's Fold. And you know, Mary Immaculate, my promise to you—when my eyes fall on this river, I shall name it in honor of your Immaculate Conception."

This thought led to another consoling one. For Father Marquette recalled that it was on December 8th last, the very feast of the Immaculate Conception, that Louis Joliet, his companion explorer, had come paddling through the ice to the Mackinac shore with the long-expected permission from Superiors in distant Quebec, to sail and seek the unknown river.

The two had spent the long winter, gathering from the stray Ottawa, Illinois, and Pottawattomie bands, who came to the bleak mission, every scrap of information and rumor about the mighty stream that flowed through the unknown lands to the west.

Comforted and strengthened in the knowledge of Mary Immaculate's aid, the Blackrobe bent to his

paddle, and the canoe sped down these waters, which no white man had ever yet seen.

An hour later, the woodsmen's canoe had forged ahead, and now Joliet's keen eye noted they stopped with dripping paddles across the bark sides and listened intently. He saw Peter, the bow paddle, reach back for his flint-lock musket that lay atop a bundle of gift beads.

"Look! Our men are on guard ahead," warned Joliet. "Dip your paddles in deeper, my Father—Jean."

Under the added urge the light birchbark canoe was lifted through the still waters till it slid alongside its mate.

As all lay on their oars, there came from beyond the curtain of dark green pines that covered the low-cliffed bank, a strange uncanny moan, such as an animal in its agony might utter.

It was very quiet in the canoes, and when a fish broke the surface nearby with a silver flash, several of the woodsmen crossed themselves devoutly.

Then on the clear air broke the quavering opening notes of a most mournful song. The notes rose and fell, and their sound was utter sorrow.

Suddenly Father Marquette's hand went up. "I have heard that song before, my children. I have heard it when I was stationed at the abandoned Mission of the Holy Spirit on Lake Superior. It is the one the Illinois call, 'The Song to Go Above.'"

He turned to his fellow explorer and said: "Louis, let us leave the men on guard and go ashore. Some poor Illinois is far along the way when he raises his Death Chant. I am needed."

Jean, the woodsman, propelled the canoe into the slack water under the low bank. Father Marquette and Louis Joliet leapt lightly ashore.

The two light crafts were backed out into the stream, while the woodsmen laid their powder where they could reach it in a hurry.

The Blackrobe, followed by his companion, disappeared into the shadows that the thickly growing pines cast. Those on guard in the canoes heard a twig snap—a cone fall. Then silence settled on the waters once more. Again the wailing notes of that Death Song came to the alert ears of the woodsmen. It wailed away as though strength had deserted the singer.

In the meantime, breaking through the underbrush, the two moccasined voyagers had come upon a scene that made the soul-hunger gnaw at the breast of the Blackrobe.

There was a small clearing, maybe an hundred steps behind the bank of the river, and here on the southern pine wall the new green growths of mid-June were all burnt away to black, snarled wires. Marquette and Joliet halted as though struck. For there on the ground in twisted, grotesque positions, mute witnesses to the agony in which they had expired, lay one—three—four seared corpses.

On the charred branches of a tall scorched pine, hurled as one might cast mud on a wall, sprawled the blackened trunk of another Indian. The charred legs and arms were outspread in a pathetic, supplicating attitude.

"In the Name of God!" exclaimed Joliet in an awed whisper, "what new deviltry of this benighted

wilderness have we stumbled on, good Father Marquette?"

Before the Blackrobe could reply, from the further edge of the scorched clearing, came again the high quivering notes of the Death Song. To these now were added the mournful howl of a dog.

Noiselessly the two stepped across the charred area, around the dreadful dead, and entered the green undergrowth beyond. A few steps, and they were gazing down upon the powder-blackened body of an old Indian.

Seated on his haunches by his master's side, with head upturned, was a lean brownish yellow hound. Seeing the two, the hound tilted his head to a steeper angle and emitted a lingering howl.

The Death Song stopped in the middle of a quavering note, and the hand of the lone singer sought and closed on a charred warclub. He lifted himself feebly to brandish the weapon in the direction of the Blackrobe.

Then it was that Joliet, with pity in his tones, whispered:

"See, my Father, the Indian's sight has been blasted away."

"On guard, No Flesh!" the Indian commanded in the Illinois tongue. "Wolves! Wolves! At last!"

The lean hound ceased howling and, standing with one paw on the Indian's breast and every tooth showing, faced the two men.

"No, brother," spoke Marquette, "not wolves, but a shepherd. What dreadful thing has happened to you and your party?"

The Indian turned to the face he could not see.

"Who is the white man that speaks to Long Fox with Illinois words?" he demanded.

Marquette smiled: "Long Fox, I am the one who prays and instructs."

The burnt hand dropped the warclub and, with sightless eyes, the Illinois searched the face of the Blackrobe.

"You are a Blackrobe. It is good," replied Long Fox. "Now I know your voice. Moons ago I sat in your Prayer Cabin on the shores of the Lake of Copper [Lake Superior] and listened to your words of wisdom. I kept them in my breast. Since I lay here I have asked the Manitou, Who made heaven and earth, that the road I follow after death be the same as yours."

"What's he saying? What has happened?" exclaimed Joliet. "This is not the work of the Sioux, or if it is, those feathered devils have devised new torments for their enemies. Truly they are the Iroquois' teachers."

"Wait, Louis. I will tell you shortly." Easing the burnt Illinois, Marquette asked questions and listened as Long Fox told his tale.

When the old Illinois had finished, the Blackrobe translated for his companion: "Long Fox says there were six Illinois in his party. They stole a powder keg from some trappers who have a cabin, that I think must have been some leagues south of the large Mascouten village where five days ago we got the two Miami guides to show us the portage to this river.

"Long Fox and his party were on their way to the Illinois country to the south. The day before yesterday they camped here, and his grandson rolled the

wilderness have we stumbled on, good Father Marquette?''

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keg too close to the camp fire. Long Fox says, suddenly the devil of the trappers came out of the keg in scorching flames.

"Then he was hurled many feet. Of his companions, only his grandson moaned for many hours. Then he also was silent like the others.

"Long Fox says it has been night since. He thought of the Prayer he had heard taught the Ottawas in the chapel at Holy Spirit Mission, and he prayed Our Blessed Lord ——"

Tears had come into Marquette's eyes and he added huskily: "Louis, tell Jean and the woodsmen to come ashore, and you bring me water."

When Joliet was gone, the Blackrobe bent lower and instructed: "Long Fox, the Good Manitou, Who made heaven and earth, has surely sent me to your side. Listen, you have been through many fights with the Sioux and you realize—for you had started your Death Chant—that the rest of the journey is short. What must one do, to go to that land of delights where death and disease are forever banished?"

"Blackrobe, one must believe in the Prayer; so I heard you teach the Ottawas."

"Well, then?"

"Then I believe, Blackrobe."

"And one must pray."

"Very well, I wish to pray, but I have not the sense to do so. Teach me, Blackrobe."

Quickly Marquette instructed this well-disposed soul.

There was a crunching of burnt pine cones, and Joliet and several of the woodsmen came into view.

Joliet carried water in a dripping birchbark dish. This he gave to Father Marquette and knelt on one knee at the priest's side.

Repeating the formula of the Sacrament, the Blackrobe poured the saving waters on the blistered brow of the old Illinois.

"It is good," said Long Fox. "Now I am ready to go along the right trail."

He turned to the hound, who had been sitting on his haunches, watching the party. "No Flesh, come here."

The hound crept closer and buried his muzzle in Long Fox's hand.

"This dog, Blackrobe, is faithful. He brought me a squirrel and kept me alive. He would have died with me. He lives and I give him to you."

Long Fox patted the brown head. "No Flesh, Blackrobe is your master now. Go to him."

Obediently the lean hound walked over to Father Marquette and sat looking up into his new owner's countenance. The tail wagged as if asking, "What orders, Master?"

Soon the woodsmen carried the Indian as gently as they could, across the charred clearing and into the gloomy pine forest. But before they came to the canoes at the bank, Long Fox struggled in their arms and they halted. They lowered the poor, burnt body to the ground. Again the Death Song of the Illinois came high and clear. There was a note of triumph in it now.

Then it quivered and broke off sharply. The hound, No Flesh, squatted back on his haunches and howled.

Marquette observed to his companion: "I gave Long Fox the name of Mary in baptism. And if I never pour the waters of salvation on another head this voyage, I feel that our expedition has been successful.

"Surely, this was a predestined one. Louis, we were almost visibly led to his side ere the end. Not in vain have I invoked Mary Immaculate. She is the leader of this expedition, and she claims her own on the way. And did you notice how she has given me a fine, faithful hound?"

The Blackrobe bent low. "Come here, No Flesh." He petted the brownish yellow head. "There is a place for you in my canoe and at my fireside."

The woodsmen left the other bodies there as they had been hurled by the exploding powder keg, but the body of this one, who had gone to God while yet the baptismal drops glistened on his forehead, they took with them.

Once more on the broad still bosom of the river, they weighted the body and in midcurrent consigned it to the waters.

As the canoes were paddled along the river that was to be known as the Wisconsin, the two in Marquette's canoe were silent, till the Blackrobe exclaimed:

"I recall that old Illinois now. Long Fox came often to my cabin at Holy Spirit Mission to look at the religious paintings I showed and listen to the instructions I gave about them. Then one day he disappeared. I thought, in my ignorance, that the seed had fallen on hard soil. How blind even the keenest-sighted of us are! Ah, Louis, my friend,

we have been witnesses to the happy death of one who tried to follow Our Master."

"Happy, yes, but, my Father," exclaimed Joliet, "if I had my choice of a death, it would be fighting —to go down gloriously for King ——"

"Or Kingdom," put in Marquette. "as did our blessed martyred brothers—good Fathers Jogues and Brebeuf twenty odd years ago on the Iroquois and the Huron Missions."

The Blackrobe sighed. "But a martyr's death is granted only to chosen souls. For us weaker ones, are left lonely deaths. Like our good Father Menard, who wore out, seeking the scattered red children of His Master to the north of us, twelve years ago, or, better yet, glorious Francis Xavier on that desolate Chinese island."

The brown eyes glistened as he went on:

"These deaths are my models. To wear out as a shepherd should and then to die alone and abandoned, this is my ideal! And it has been, ever since I was a wee lad in my native Laon, and the Good God first put into my curly head the desire of serving Him here in the mid-American wildernesses. But how I chatter, and you paddle!"

Jean, the woodsman, drove his paddle into the water, viciously murmuring: "They can have their going down gloriously for the King in France and their lonely deaths, but if I had my way, I'd like, please God, to die in my bed.

"Heavens help us! If half the tales of those two feather-stuck and paint-daubed Miamis, who showed us the portage to this river and then refused to go any further, are true, it's doubtful if I will ever see

an honest bed again. Going—going—God knows where—in search of a great river, whose banks are lined with skulking Sioux, or worse savages. My poor scalplock! Soon you and I are liable to say good-bye forever!"

"Shame, Jean," chided the Blackrobe; "we paddle under the protection of her who is more powerful than all the red warriors in the New World.

"Is not that correct, No Flesh?" The Blackrobe looked down upon his dog, lying on a reed mat in the bottom of the canoe.

The brownish yellow hound wagged his tail contentedly.

* * * * * * * * *

CHAPTER II

THE GREAT WATER

THE next morning, gray light fog clouds covered parts of the river as Father Marquette and Louis Joliet stood in the shore willows of an island and looked towards the unknown stretches ahead. Vaguely through the mists downstream appeared the towhead of another island, thickly grown with aspens. Opposite, wooded points on the banks loomed up. Beyond, the fog cut off the view. Something of the fascination of gazing upon stretches of this veiled world yet to be explored, held the two men.

The woodsmen, concealed in the willows, were busy overhauling the two canoes, and the commanders were about to give the signal to embark, when No Flesh, who was foraging in the underbrush, came up and began to growl.

At the same moment, through a break in the misty horizon, Joliet saw something that made him pull the Blackrobe to the ground. He uttered a warning to the woodsmen, and all movement behind the willow screen ceased. As a precaution against barking, Marquette held No Flesh's jaws.

Out of the gray cloud wall along the flats on the southern shore skimmed a small bark canoe. It carried two plumed Indians, their faces vermilion

daubed. Another bark glided into sight and then three more came out of the mists.

"This is no hunting party. Our brothers are painted for war," observed Marquette; "and from the manner in which they paddle, they are Sioux. Ottawas and Illinois paddle differently."

The Siouan party were kneeling in their small crafts. Each bonneted warrior took three or four dips of his paddle to the right and then the same number of strokes to the left, and the bark canoes seemed to fly over the smooth waters.

As silently as they had come out of the mists of the lower river, the war party glided along the further shore and disappeared into a foggy cloud upstream.

"But for that leak Francis and René discovered in the woodsmen's canoe," said Joliet, as the last of the hostile Sioux was swallowed up in the gray fog, "we would have paddled into the midst of them. It is not a pleasant thought." Joliet smiled ruefully, but he continued: "Yet we must go on to seek fuller knowledge of the Great Water; whether it flows into the South Sea, or the Western Ocean below the British Colony of Virginia, or the Mexican gulf where the Spanish are."

"As always Mary Immaculate shields her own," Marquette's countenance was glowing. "I feel such confidence, Louis, my friend, that we shall in all safety visit the nations dwelling along the great river. Mary Immaculate will permit this. Unworthy client as I am, she will let me open the passage to such of our Fathers as have awaited this good fortune for so long a time."

When no more Sioux appeared, the order was given to resume the voyage. Again, Marquette, Joliet, and Jean paddled in the first canoe. No Flesh picked out a comfortable spot between bags of supplies and watched the still shores slip by. He showed interest when the canoe breasted a point and came upon a doe and her fawn, drinking at the waterside.

The morning sun was burning up the mists on the river valley, and before the canoes had added a league to their journey, the clear blue sky of a June day opened above the party.

Hot high noon blazed down upon them, and the twisting river widened. Oaks and walnuts and basswood crowded either shore. More islands, thick wooded with willows and aspens, rose ahead, drew near, and dropped astern of the tireless paddlers. The scallops of green-clad hills back of the flood plains of this river unbent and straightened away. A group of woody delta islands was about the canoes. It was mid-afternoon of the seventeenth of June, 1673.

The little expedition paddled on, keeping full in the current, close to the green northern shore. There came into the mind of Joliet fragments of the warnings the elder of the Miami guides had given as they bade the voyagers good-bye at the Wisconsin portage —"Whitemen, strange monsters lie in wait for such venturesome ones as you . . . . evil spirits of air and water will plot your disaster." . . . "We will not see you again." . . . "We go no further."

The canoe swept around a willow point, and Joliet was about to speak when Marquette turned back from his bow position. At once Louis Joliet noted the rapture that shone on the tanned face of the Blackrobe.

Marquette pointed ahead at the new world of water that was being revealed to them.

"We have reached the Great Water! Oh! Louis, my friend, I cannot express to you the joy that floods my breast. So long have I prayed the aid of Mary Immaculate that it might be permitted to me, all unworthy as I am, to behold this river of rivers and to bring the Prayer to her Son's red-skinned children who dwell along its banks."

Tears were in Marquette's eyes and, unashamed, he let them course down his cheeks.

The two canoes were paddled side by side, and as they floated along, the vastness of this mighty stream awed into silence the first of whitemen to behold its upper reaches.

At Marquette's command the prows of the canoes were turned into the northern shore and a landing was made on the sunlit point. Here he and Joliet turned scientists and, unpacking their instruments, took the sun.

When their calculations were finished, Marquette announced: "If my figures are correct, it is near 42½° where this river we are leaving pours its waters into the ——"

The Blackrobe checked himself "I was almost forgetting a promise I made to Mary Immaculate long ago."

Marquette stooped where the swifter current ran and cupping his hands, lifted some of the water. He poured the bright drops back, saying: "O greatest of streams, I christen you henceforth with the name of Mary's unique prerogative—I christen you the River of the Conception."

As Father Marquette began to speak, Louis Joliet and the woodsmen hastily tossed off their beaver caps and standing erect and bareheaded they uttered a loud "Amen" as the Blackrobe finished.

A long time the Blackrobe stood there, his eyes fixed longingly on the wide waters that flowed ever southward between the towering bluffs. Then he lifted his gaze on high and his companions heard him pray:

"O Mary Immaculate, Mother of God and Mediatrix of All Graces, aid me to carry the knowledge of your Son to these nations that dwell in darkness along these lower shores."

Re-embarking in the two canoes, the voyagers pushed away from the muddy point and with a few strokes they were out on the choppy expanse of the newly christened river. It was very still on that world of strange waters. The green high bluff to the left slid by and shut off the view of the woody islands at the mouth of the river the canoes had descended.

Once out in the middle of the new river, the explorers sounded and found the depth as much as ten brasses of water! When they resumed their paddles, Joliet called to the Blackrobe in the bows: "My Father, I have just remembered a coincidence. You christened this river, the red men call the Great Water, after Mary's Immaculate Conception, and did you know that twenty-eight years ago next September in the Upper Town of Quebec, I was christened in the Church of the Immaculate Conception?"

The Blackrobe shook his head. "I did not know that, Louis, but I do know you and I would be unworthy sons of Mary Immaculate if we did not con-

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fide in her powerful protection the length of this voyage."

When the sun sank behind the western bluff, the seven were close to an island; and though they had not seen any signs of Indians since sighting the Sioux party in the morning, the leaders deemed it safer to camp on this island rather than to land under one of the bluffs.

No Flesh dashed ashore as the two canoes were drawn up on the sands, and Peter and Francis asked permission to go out in the current and cast their nets for sturgeon.

"I assure you, my Father," claimed Peter, "I have seen several since we paddled out on this monstrous river."

Marquette gave the permission and then, lifting the breviary from his neck, began to say some of his Office before light failed.

A half an hour passed and then wild shouts from the fishermen startled all on the island. They saw the canoe being furiously paddled towards the campfire.

René caught the prow of the canoe and steadied it while Peter and Francis tumbled out.

It was Peter who found his voice first. "My Father!—Sieur!—the Mascoutens were right! It is a river of monsters. Would that I were back at Mackinac! Would that I had never left the Rock of Quebec! Would that I were safe in beautiful France!"

Marquette motioned the excited woodsman into silence and demanded of Francis an explanation. It came with a torrent of words.

"We—Peter and I—had caught three sturgeons and were congratulating ourselves that we would have more than smoked fish and Indian corn for our dinner, when—when ——"

Peter burst in: "when I saw it clearly. It was coming directly towards the side of the canoe, and my musket was on shore."

"What was?" demanded Louis Joliet.

"I know not, Sieur. I know much about fish. I have fished since I was no taller than the width of our canoe, but the devil I never laid eyes on till I saw him swimming towards us."

"What stroke was he using?" queried Marquette with twitching lips. His question was ignored.

Francis put in: "Then I saw him, and I never wish to lay eyes on him again!" He shook his pudding-bag cap most emphatically.

"He had the head of a tiger," Peter began to describe the apparition, "with whiskers, and straight, erect ears, and the sharp nose of a wildcat. The head was gray, and the neck ——"

Francis continued the description, "the neck was black as that powder-burnt Illinois I helped bury yesterday."

"Then you decided to paddle ashore?"

"That we did, my Father. And I will swear to my dying day it was Lucifer himself who came swimming towards us."

"Do not be childish, my bearded one," the Black-robe chided Peter.

Joliet had stepped to the canoe and he exclaimed: "What these two brave children saw was some new fish. Naturally, on strange waters we are liable to

meet with new species. Quite likely they are very tasty."

He turned to the nearest woodsman. "Charles, take these sturgeons that our valiant fishermen neglected to throw at the devil and prepare them."

Looking at Peter and Francis, he added: "Maybe, after you children have eaten and smoked and slept, you will feel better."

The group broke up laughing, and soon dinner was cooked and eaten.

Then as night closed in, the fire was put out. The two canoes were anchored some little distance from the island shore. Joliet and the woodsmen crouched down as they could and dropped into the sound sleep of tired men. But Marquette, with No Flesh curled contentedly on the mats of woven leaves at his side and with his rosary slipping steadily between his fingers, sat out the first watch.

Aloft, the vague, vast sweep of stars looked down, and the day of the discovery, June 17, 1673, passed into history.

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CHAPTER III

THE FRIENDLY PEORIAS

IT WAS the Sieur Joliet who first discovered the tracks in the wet sand. There they were—the innumerable markings of naked feet. The two canoes had been paddling for days down the swift-flowing River of the Conception. By now the seven men had become accustomed to the vast panorama that ever unfolded, as reach after reach of the master stream opened ahead of them. Towering green-clad bluffs seemed to slip noiselessly back as they were breasted and a new wet expanse was revealed.

Now and then a solitary eagle, roosting turkeys, a rare sight of game—deer, black bear, the dust of distant herds of buffaloes—were seen. But no signs of Indians, friendly or hostile, had the explorer come upon during those long days on the silent river.

As each evening was about to close down, the expedition had landed; usually on the wooded towhead of an island as more suitable for defense if an attack was attempted. Here over a small fire the woodsmen cooked the scanty meal. Then before darkness could betray the voyagers to sharp eyes on the bluffs, all fire was stamped out, the seven climbed back into the canoes and, dropping downstream, they anchored in the dark shelter of the current. With one always on guard, the rest snatched what sleep they could

from their narrow and uncomfortable quarters, pillowed on the bundles of supplies and gifts.

The discovery of footprints had been quite accidental. It was the eighth day after reaching the great river, and the Blackrobe's canoe was well in the current which was sweeping close under the western shore. The woodsmen's canoe was fifty yards astern.

Now Joliet poised his dripping paddle and called to Father Marquette, who knelt in the bow: "My Father, at last! Look yonder, beyond the tall grass, where the bank slopes. I think——"

He got no further, for at that instant a black glistening apparition rose out of the current ten feet away and hurled itself at the frail side of the canoe.

Jean, the woodsman, cried: "We're lost!"

The birchbark craft staggered as though a great tree had hit it, and water squirted up from the bottom. No Flesh barked excitedly and then followed his master and Joliet, as they dove overboard.

Grasping the bark side, the two men struck out, supporting the sinking canoe towards the wet banks. It was beached just as it filled.

"I have seen the devil!" cried Jean from his seat in the water-logged craft. His hands were busy, preventing the mats from floating off. "And, my Father —Sieur—you did a foolhardy thing."

But Father Marquette, wading ashore, shook his head.

"Hardly His Majesty—yet. That was some strange fish, for I also saw 'the devil' that instant he broke surface, and I assure you he had, not horns, but fins."

The other canoe with Francis, René, Charles, and Peter had come up swiftly and now grounded alongside its leaking mate. The four woodsmen spilled out and began to examine the damage to the bottom of the canoe.

Joliet had forgotten the leak. His observant eyes were on the imprints that spread from the water's edge.

"My Father," he called to the Blackrobe, "let the woodsmen get out their pitch and needles. What think you of these?"

He pointed his fringed dripping arm along the shore. All the tracks of naked feet converged on a narrow and well-beaten trail that led over the incline of the bank.

When the two stood on the ridge and saw the vast prairie that extended towards the west Marquette remarked: "That devil of Jean's was a strange large fish that lives in this father of all waters. Evidently a weighty member of the finny tribe that frightened our fishermen the other evening. I saw it clearly.

"I am thinking, Louis, Jean's devil did us an exceedingly good turn, besides giving you and me the opportunity for a welcome swim. But for this accident we might have paddled downstream and never discovered this trail that certainly leads to a new village of our red-skinned brothers."

He looked into the gray eyes of Joliet, and at length his companion nodded.

"Then let us charge the men to repair this leak in our canoe and stand on guard."

Joliet suggested: "What of taking Peter or Charles or our brave Jean along with us?"

Marquette negatived this. "They are all full of the old-squaws' tales they heard in the Fox and Mascouten villages. Poor Jean is on the point of seeing a legion of Satan's subjects in yonder prairie. If this is to be a hazardous walk, you and I will expose ourselves to the mercy of these unknown people alone. As ever—Mary Immaculate will be our bodyguard."

So the two retraced their steps to the water's edge, where the five woodsmen were busy on the damaged canoe's repairs. The Blackrobe stuffed his pockets with a string of red gift beads that a fellow missioner had sent him from distant Martinique.

Then the explorers set out confidently. They had gone but a short distance when a familiar whine at Marquette's heel informed him that No Flesh had joined the expedition. He was sent back to the canoes.

An hour's hot walk across the prairie into the blinding sun along an evident trail dried their clothes and brought them near a village of prairie dogs, whose sentries barked a warning. All the sturdy little animals whisked out of sight as the two approached.

Game was plentiful. They sighted an immense herd of buffaloes, flocks of turkeys, and a whole cloud of wood pigeons. Quail whirred up under their very moccasins.

Beneath the welcome shade of a grove of magnificent spreading oaks they rested and noted that the beaten track turned here sharply to the north.

Half a league further they disturbed a dozen buz-

zards, which rose and circled sluggishly. They came on the remains of a slain buffalo. Several broken arrows lay by the carcass. The skin had been removed, and a yellowish animal slunk away as they approached. But the explorer's attention was distracted, for through a break in the trees, they saw the sparkle of water ahead, and soon they were standing in the willow fringe that banked another river.

This new stream curved by them in a wide sweep, and well in the curve on a gentle bluff stood the rush-matted cabins of a village. Beyond it, fields of corn and tobacco extended down to a clump of cedars. Tiny copper-colored figures moved about; some near the water and others before the cabins.

On the side of another hill, distant about half a league from the first, two other brown clusters of cabins with smoke rising into the still air denoted other villages.

"Soon we will know, Louis mine," joked Marquette, "whether we are to be feasted or furnish the staple of a Big Kettle."

"You have the courage, my Father," admired Joliet, "to dread nothing, where everything is to be feared."

Joliet piously blessed himself, and the two advanced along the broadening trail till they heard the high shouts and joyous barks of children and dogs at play. Later, there came to them clearly the shrill voices of squaws smoking meat before the village.

They walked to where the woods ceased and the trail led across a field in which grew beans and squashes. Joliet, putting his hands to his lips, shouted lustily. The nearer squaws looked around

at the sound. Some boys, diving and swimming in the warm waters at the foot of the bank, straightened up and, as Father Marquette in his long black robe advanced out of the shadows of the cedars into the strong sunlight of the fields, one of the glistening boys dashed from the water and ran screaming loudly towards the nearest rush-walled cabin. At once a drum sounded. The children and squaws vanished. Red-skinned braves with bows and war-clubs swarmed out of the cabins.

Marquette and Joliet stood quietly watching the spreading excitement.

"They see, my Father," spoke Joliet, "we come peacefully and have given notice of our arrival."

The Blackrobe nodded and added: "I was just thinking what would have happened in my native Laon, if two of our red brothers suddenly appeared at the gates of the city and hailed the guard."

"They would have been shot down like prowling wolves," promptly answered Louis Joliet. "But, see, here comes order out of disorder."

Four old men, clad in square skin breechclouts, with their long hair braided and hanging over each shoulder, were advancing. The two who wore the red scarfs of captains carried in their raised right hands long feathered pipes, from which issued gentle plumes of smoke.

The Indians walked slowly towards the waiting whitemen. Their metal armbands flashed as they caught the sun's rays, and their necklaces of elk teeth and shells rattled. At every five or six steps they turned silently towards the west and raised the pipes, as though offering them to the sun.

The four spent a long time crossing the clearing between the village cabins and the waiting two. Never a word was spoken in the interval. All the while, the entire population of the village was gathering behind the fringe of warriors and with eager fingers pointed out and discussed the trappings of the whitemen.

When the four red men were maybe twenty feet away, they came to a stop and, for the last time offering the pipes to the sun, they stood in silence watching Marquette and his companion.

"These are friendly, Louis mine," whispered the Blackrobe. "Note their lack of vermilion warpaint, their skin coverings, and, see, their motions are the motions of peace, not of war."

Then raising his voice, Marquette addressed the four in Illinois: "Who are you, men?"

The oldest of the pipe bearers answered gravely: "We are Peorias."

"Then you are Illinois and friends of our friends," responded Marquette heartily, "for we come in peace from the lands to the north, where the Hurons dwell along the shores of Michillimackinac."

At this the oldest Peoria invited the whitemen to sit down. The four Peorias squatted in a semicircle. The captain put the pipe to his lips and, inhaling, blew the gray smoke into the air. Each of the others did the same and then the last passed the pipe to Marquette and motioned him to smoke. The Blackrobe gravely put the calumet to his lips and, blowing a cloud of smoke into the air, passed the peace pipe to his companion.

The first Peoria now invited the visitors to accom-

pany them into the cabins. As the group crossed the clearing, the silent Indians gave way; even the grave children, all eyes, shrank back. Only the papooses, strapped to the boards that hung from the cabin poles, looked on in stolid wonder. A venturesome black puppy, all wagging tail, waddled into the path and a small girl, risking everything to rescue her pet, dove and captured the puppy.

Before the largest rush-matted cabin of the village stood a totem post. To the top of this was affixed a buffalo head, painted green. On a stick before it hung the carcass of a dog like No Flesh, evidently sacrificed that very morning. By this stood an old man. He was unclothed, except for the red scarf of his captainship and his elk teeth necklace. His arms were extended and lifted towards the sun, so that the shadow of his fingers fell on his upturned face.

When the strange visitors stood before him, he spoke in Illinois: "How beautiful the sun is, O whitemen, when you come to visit us! All our people await you eagerly and you shall enter all our cabins in peace."

With this he ordered a slave boy at his elbow to lift the buffalo robe that did for a door, and with gestures he invited the two to enter his cabin.

Within it was hot, and the sun's rays slanted through cracks in the rush roof. By this fitful light Marquette saw a crowd of elderly Peorias was seated around the cabin walls. They looked curiously on the blackrobe and his companion. Occasionally they repeated the welcome chant, spoken in a low chorus,

"How good it is, my brothers, that you should visit us."

On new reed mats the visitors were seated. Again the calumet was produced and, after the wrinkled elders of the village, each in turn had smoked the pipe of peace was passed to Marquette and Joliet.

The Blackrobe spoke and presented gifts, stating the nature of his voyage.

Then the captain addressed the guests: "This is Peourea, my village, that you have honored by entering; but in Moingwena, which is four hundred paces from here, is Red Calumet, our Great Captain. He has already heard of your visit, my brothers, for I have dispatched a runner. He would wish to hold a council with you."

The Blackrobe explained: "It is in our hearts to hold a council with Red Calumet. But, first, down the trail about two leagues on the banks of the Great River, are five of our companions. Their skin is like ours, but their hearts are anxious, for they await our return. Will my brother send one of his slaves with a message to assure them of our safety?"

At this Marquette asked for a sheet of bark. A slave produced it and the Blackrobe writing a hasty message handed it back. The elders watched the Blackrobe's actions narrowly.

The Peoria captain received the sheet gravely and inquired: "Will this speak good words to your white brothers, when it is given into their hands?"

"It will speak words of peace."

"Then I will send my swiftest runner with it and, before we have walked to the nearest cabins of

Moingwena, it shall be in the hands of your brothers and their hearts shall be at ease.

"If our brothers are rested, let us walk to Moingwena."

All the way to the village of the Great Captain, Peorias lay in the grass by the trailside and watched the white men in wondering silence. When the little group had passed on, some would run in a wide circle across the prairie and come to the trail again to feast their eyes on this sight of the whitemen they had heard about but had never seen before.

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CHAPTER IV

RED CALUMET

IN THE center of Moingwena, before several totem posts, topped with dried buffalo heads painted green, stood Red Calumet. The Great Captain of the Peorias was between two older men. All three stood erect and naked, holding their smoking feather-adorned peace pipes turned towards the sun.

Marquette and Joilet were conducted into a large cabin and seated on reed mats. Again they smoked the calumet and listened to words of welcome.

The Blackrobe arose and laying a string of the red Martinique beads at the feet of the Great Captain, began: "This is a present to make glad your heart and to tell you we are seven whitemen in two canoes. We are journeying peacefully to visit the nations dwelling on the Great Water.

"And this," the Blackrobe laid before the Great Captain a belt of porcelain, in which the blue beads made a number of crosses against the white bead background. "This is a present to tell you good tidings of great joy. For I come as the Ambassador of the Manitou Who made all things. For many moons you have been ignorant of Him. In His great love He has had pity on you Peoria Illinois. He wishes to make Himself known to all of your tribe. I am sent by Him for that purpose. Your brothers to

the north, who have received the Prayer, call such as me a Blackrobe."

Again Marquette laid a handful of bright glass beads at Red Calumet's feet.

"This last present is to open your hearts that you will gladly give us all the information you possess about the Great Water and the nations who dwell along its lower banks."

When the Blackrobe had concluded his speech, a Peoria elder took from the hands of a young squaw a large wooden bark dish, heaped with sagamite. Filling a stone spoon with this mixture of Indian corn, seasoned with bear's fat, he put the food into the mouth of the Blackrobe. Again and again he fed Father Marquette as though he were a little child. Another elder fed Joliet.

The next course consisted of a platter on which were three fish that Marquette recognized as smaller specimens of the strange fish that had frightened his woodsmen. Red Calumet told the Blackrobe they were catfish and some of them grew to the size of war canoes.

When this smoking dish was placed before the guests, the Peoria elder carefully removed all bones and then, blowing on the particles, he put them into the Blackrobe's mouth.

The third course the squaws carried in was a yellow dog the weight of No Flesh. It could not have been dead ten minutes. When Red Calumet noticed that his guests were not accustomed to eating such flesh, this large bark platter was immediately removed from before them and the Peoria squaws brought in the last course, a great Indian delicacy.

This was the steaming tongue of a buffalo. It was divided and cooled and placed on the lips of both the whitemen.

As with all the courses, the two guests were first served and only then Red Calumet and his captains touched the food.

All during the feasting, the sides of the cabin were filled with a silent fringe of Peorias. These came and went, their places being taken by others of the village, who feasted their eyes on the unique sight of whitemen.

When the last dish had been eaten, the Great Captain of the Peorias stood before his guests.

"I thank you, Blackrobe, and you, White Captain," —Red Calumet addressed Joliet—"for having taken so much trouble to come and visit us. Never has the earth been so beautiful, nor the sun so bright as today. Never has our river been so calm, nor so clear of rocks, which your canoes have removed in passing. Never has our tobacco tasted so good, nor our corn appeared so fine as we now see it."

Here the Great Captain took from an elder, seated behind him, a string of elk teeth.

"These I wish to give you, Blackrobe, to show you my heart. May your heart be softened towards me and all my nation. For we have heard from Illinois who dwell beyond the other side of the Great Water and have been to the land of the Ottawas, rumors of you and the Prayer. You know the Great Spirit Who made us all. It is you who speak to Him and hear His words. Beg Him to give my people good hunting and many scalps of our enemies, the Sioux."

One of the old men handed the Great Captain a

scarf such as Peoria chiefs wore. It was woven of bear's and buffaloes' hair, dyed bright red and yellow and gray.

"This," said Red Calumet, "is to go about your neck and hold you here in Moingwena. For further down the Great Water are many tribes. They are all at war one with another. These belong to the powerful nation of the Chickasaws. They use long wooden canoes. They are so warlike that they do not hesitate to go towards the lands of the Iroquois and there raid and burn. The hearts of all these people will not be right towards the Blackrobe and the Prayer. They will take away his life as that of an enemy. They will eat his body and the bodies of all his companions."

At the end of the Great Captain's warning, Father Marquette told him that he knew of no happiness as great as losing his life for the glory of the Great Spirit Who made all things.

Gravely Red Calumet replied that he did not understand the words of the Blackrobe but he knew he did not speak with a split tongue.

The cool of evening had come and Marquette and Joliet were conducted by the Great Captain through the whole village. Marquette estimated there were more than three hundred cabins.

Gifts of beaded belts and leggins and small birch-bark platters of red Indian corn and apples and dried chestnuts were offered to the two at the door of many of the cabins.

These a little slave boy, who attended Red Calumet, carried till his arms ached and his proud face was almost hidden behind the rising tide of presents.

When the tour was over, Red Calumet led his guests to a large cabin. Here fresh reed sleeping mats were arranged.

Marquette sent the slave boy to return the gifts, and thank the givers, saying that the Blackrobe and his companion had small canoes and they could not possibly carry all these presents with them.

It was black night and quiet, but for the barking of the village dogs, when the slave boy returned to Marquette's cabin. Seeing the two guests deep in sleep, he silently threw down a mat and, curling himself up into a ball, likewise fell asleep.

The following noon Red Calumet escorted Father Marquette and Louis Joliet back to the banks of the Great Water. This time they were not alone, for more than six hundred of the friendly Peorias accompanied them across the waving prairie.

When the banks of the mighty river were reached, Red Calumet and his elders noticed the two canoes. Eagerly they examined them, praising the whitemen's way of stiffening the birch-bark sides with cedar splints.

Their curiosity satisfied, the Great Captain motioned the whitemen to sit down. Then, with the painted elders of his village squatting in a large semicircle and behind them the curves of the Peorias, he began a long warning about the monsters of air and water who lay in wait in the lower river for those who paddled canoes.

"Against these, Blackrobe," Red Calumet concluded, "I can offer no aid, but I know your Manitou is more powerful than all monsters. May He protect

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you and bring you back to us who wish to know the Prayer."

An elder handed the Great Captain a polished red stone pipe. Its long stem was gorgeously decorated with green and gray and white feathers and the heads and necks of birds.

Red Calumet walked across the sand and, most reverently placing this pipe in the lap of Marquette, straightened up and said:

"My heart, Blackrobe, will be at ease if you will accept this gift. Against the monsters of the Great Water it will not aid you and your brothers, but if you show it at the approach of the warring tribes downstream, they will put the arrow back in the quiver and hang their warclubs at their belt. I assure you, if you raise this pipe above the bows of your canoes, they will know you are on a mission of peace. You will be permitted to pass unharmed along their shores. All tribes respect this, for this is the Calumet of the Sun."

Red Calumet sat down and there was a general shout of approval.

Father Marquette, speaking in Illinois, thanked the Great Captain for his gifts. Then he renewed his promise, assuring the Peorias: "We must paddle down the Great Water to bring the Prayer to these nations to the south.

"In four moons I will come back and live in your cabins and teach you all the words of God, that you call the Prayer. For you have hearts open to receive the Prayer, and the Blackrobe will not forget this.

"Should it be that I cannot return, I will send a message on a piece of bark to the Great Blackrobe,

as I sent words yesterday to these five men in our canoes, and he will order another Blackrobe to come to your villages. This I promise to do and you know that I do not speak with a split tongue. See, I will leave you a remembrance of my promise."

The Blackrobe drew his crucifix from his cincture and holding it aloft, he circled the points of the compass, so that all the Peorias might see the crucifix.

"This, Peorias, is the sign of Him Who made heaven and earth. If it pleases you, Red Calumet, give the order and have the squaws make a large sign like this and place it here."

The Blackrobe indicated a small mound nearby.

When The Great Captain understood Marquette's wish, he dispatched squaws and quickly they cut down a twenty-five foot tree and a smaller one. Their tomahawks hacked off all branches before they dragged the two poles to the Blackrobe. With deerskin thongs Jean and Peter lashed these poles into a gigantic cross.

In silence the hundreds of painted Peorias watched the work of the woodsmen. When they had the cross erected on the mound, Marquette stood under it and spoke: "This, Red Calumet, and Peorias, is my farewell gift to you. This is the tree of the Blackrobe."

As Marquette ceased speaking, the Great Captain threw several handfuls of tobacco on the cross to show his respect. Then he took his red scarf of interwoven bear and buffalo hair and, looping the symbol of his rank through the air, hung it on the high cross-bar. Thus it came under Red Calumet's protection—a thing sacred to all Peorias.

As the Blackrobe was about to step into his canoe,

he gave the small slave boy who had attended him a handful of beads. The boy smiled brightly.

Red Calumet stepped forward and resting his hand on the black hair of the slave boy, said: "Blackrobe, this is Crow Dog, my slave son. I have noticed that you look kindly on him. He has been faithful to me since I took him prisoner. Now I send him with you to remind you always that we await your return to our villages."

The Great Captain of the Peorias dropped his hand to the boy's bare shoulder and ordered: "Crow Dog, go in your master's canoe and obey him as you have obeyed me. Go."

The slave boy sprang lightly into Marquette's canoe and squatted down alongside the friendly No Flesh.

Once more the expedition headed out into the swift current of the Great Water. Before the towhead of a wooded island hid the sight from view, Father Marquette stopped paddling and looking back saw the Peorias were still lining the bank. He waved and, before his hand was lowered, lines of the Peorias were waving back. Their cries came across the waters and the heart of the Blackrobe was gladdened.

He thought how he had come in doubt to a strange people and they, from their Great Captain down, had received him as a friend—as one expected and loved. He knew this new tribe awaited the Prayer as Long Fox had.

Tears came into Marquette's eyes and he spoke huskily to Joliet: "It is worth every hardship and discomfort to bring the Word of God to a people as well disposed as these Peorias. Ah! Louis, you

may have your fame and your favor of Monsieur, the Count de Frontenac, our governor. We Blackrobes have greater consolation in the thought of these children of the American wilderness who are so eager to know the True God."

CHAPTER V

CROW DOG

BEFORE the following day's paddling was half over, the small slave, Crow Dog, had lost the silence and awe with which at the Peoria village he had looked upon the whitemen.

He proved a lively talkative lad, and the monkey-like way he would imitate Jean's paddling stroke often made Marquette and the woodsmen laugh.

When evening came and Marquette picked out the island in the distance on which they would have dinner, the slave boy grasped a spare paddle and went to it with a will.

The two canoes crept closer and Crow Dog's eyes danced as he pointed ahead and said to the Blackrobe, who as usual held the bow position: "New master, on the island will be berries that I like. I will gather many for the meal."

Jean interrupted: "One knows not what strange berries grow along this wide river. I'll eat none."

"Ugh! Then there will be double share for Crow Dog," said the boy with a grin.

The party paddled the length of the heavily timbered island and, satisfied that it was uninhabited, Marquette petting No Flesh, pointed ashore. The brownish yellow hound willingly leapt over the side and swam to the nearby island.

Quietly all waited as Marquette's dog was lost to

sight. No barkings of alarm came out of the green tangled undergrowth. Soon No Flesh returned wagging his tail. He stopped with legs astride at the water's edge to lap up a good drink.

"Master, No Flesh knows no Indians live here," observed Crow Dog, "but many berries of the kind that I like."

"I must see and taste these berries, if Crow Dog is sure that they are not poisonous."

"New master, Crow Dog does not put that kind of berries into his stomach," vehemently asserted the slave boy. "He did once. They had a very bad demon in them. Ugh! that demon bit me in here." The slave boy rubbed his stomach reminiscently, "I thought I was a dead man till my master's squaw gave me a very vile drink that drove the berry demon out."

After the leaders were satisfied that the island was safe, the canoes were headed for the willows and beached. As the green boughs swept over the craft, Crow Dog leapt out and steadied Marquette's canoe. Then he had a swim and was helping the woodsmen gather drift wood for the fire, when the Blackrobe, having finished writing the day's diary, called him: "Come, Crow Dog, take that reed basket and show me where these wonderful berries grow."

Willingly the boy led the way through the still shadows of the woods till he discovered the bushes he was seeking. With eager hands he filled his mouth with the berries.

Father Marquette examined several and found them to be mulberries. At once his fear of poisoning was dispelled and he helped fill the basket. While

the two worked, the Blackrobe asked Crow Dog the question: "How did you come to be a slave of the Peorias?"

"Because I am not of Illinois blood, Master." Crow Dog began to speak, and the Blackrobe, interested, sat on a fallen log while he listened to the boy's words.

Thirty minutes later they were interrupted by the appearance of Charles, who called the two to dinner. The newly discovered berries proved a welcome addition to the simple meal, and even Jean overcame his prejudice enough to send Crow Dog after more.

Before the light failed, Father Marquette finished reading his breviary. It was a warm evening at the end of June. The embers had been sanded lest their light might betray the expedition to sharp hostile eyes on the dark looming shores of the Great Water. The woodsmen were softly singing songs of distant France, and Crow Dog, with No Flesh parked between his knees, was listening. Joliet came up and Father Marquette said: "Louis, sit down and fill up your pipe. I want you to listen to an interesting story."

The Blackrobe called the slave boy. "Crow Dog, I wish you to retell what you told me when we were picking mulberries."

The small slave did not need any second invitation. "You must know, whitemen," he began importantly, "I am not a Peoria. My people live across the prairie, but I do not know my people, for the squaws told me, when I was a papoose, strapped to a board, I was taken by the Sioux. I have always been a slave. My first master was Bear's Head. He was a Sioux

captain and very brave. His village was three days' walk—this way—from the banks of the Great Water." Crow Dog pointed to the west.

"Once at nut time Bear's Head went with a large hunting party towards the setting sun where the large buffalo herds are. He took me with him to help the squaws smoke the meat. There was snow on the ground when we came back with many meat packages. But when we came to our lands, the squaws wailed and Bear's Head learnt that an Ottawa war party had come suddenly to his lands and had taken eighty captives. It was very rare that the Ottawas raided our lands, for not many Ottawas take Sioux captives.

"One of the captive squaws escaped. She got back to Bear's Head and his people. She told where the prisoners were being taken. A ransom party set out. Bear's Head was captain. His face was not painted this time. He carried the calumet. I carried some of the ransom robes. Ugh! They were very heavy.

"We came to the Ottawa village where a man like my new master had a Prayer cabin."

"The boy means," Father Marquette put in softly, "the Mission of the Holy Spirit."

"New master, I do not know your name for this village, but my master, Bear's Head, called it The Place Across From The Island That Goes And Comes."

Joliet explained: "That is the Indian name for Minong, an island in Lake Superior, which at times is hidden from the shore by mists. I was there in '68 as interpreter for a party searching the regions for copper mines.

"Go on, Crow Dog."

"Here Bear's Head showed the calumet, and his party was received. But I heard one of the captains tell Bear's Head to watch out, for the Ottawas did not have one mind. Some of the Ottawa elders wished to ransom the captives. Some of the Ottawa young warriors did not wish to ransom, but burn them over the fires as the Iroquois do in the lands towards the rising sun.

"There was a Blackrobe in this village who had more years than my new master—"

"Father Claude Allouez. Indeed, he has—and more merit before God," put in Marquette fervently.

"Bear's Head trusted this Blackrobe. He demanded that the council be held in his Prayer cabin. So this Blackrobe stood at the bearskin door of his cabin and he stopped all the Ottawas as they came into the council. He made them pile their clubs and tomahawks and knives outside the Prayer cabin. Then he made the Sioux ambassadors do the same. Ugh! He did not know that the Sioux always carry two stone knives; one attached to their breechclout, and the other suspended from their hair.

"This Blackrobe did not search us slaves. It would have been better if he had searched more thoroughly, for my master had hidden five knives in the buffalo robes for ransom that I carried.

"When the Ottawa captains met Bear's Head and the other Sioux ambassadors, they spoke soft words at first. They said they would take the robes and ransom the captives because they were brothers of the Sioux. The Blackrobe was pleased because the council was a success. Ugh! I knew better than that

Blackrobe. For I overheard Bear's Head whisper to a Sioux captain: 'These dogs speak with split tongues. They seek our lives.'

"I was seated on the pile of buffalo robes and I saw an Ottawa captain walk to the side of a Sioux. Then this captain called out loud: 'All Sioux have hearts like coyotes.' The Sioux folded his arms and, stepping closer to the Ottawa, replied: 'Captain of the dogs, if you think I tremble, strike straight at my heart.'

"Quick as lightning comes out of the black clouds the captain struck. I saw the knife and then I saw only its handle above the breast of the Sioux. He called out to the other ambassadors: 'My brothers, they are killing us. All Ottawas have split tongues. They do not wish ransom. They wish to steal our buffalo robes.' The Sioux straightened and then his head fell across the shoulders of the Ottawa and his body slumped to the floor.

"All the Ottawas had concealed knives out now. I heard the Blackrobe calling loud words, but he might have been speaking to white water in a rapids and telling it to stop. I jumped down and threw knives to Bear's Head and other Sioux ambassadors. I heard my master's war cry. Then two struggling captains stepped on me, and a knife flashed against my side. It pained like fire. See, it is this scar.

"The Sioux in the Prayer cabin tried to cut their way out, but more Ottawas with knives stopped them. I was knocked down again. Then I crawled over a body and drew a knife from it. I lay like a dead man along side of this body, but I had the knife ready to slash and stab. The fighting was very fierce with-

in the cabin. I could not see my master, but I heard his war cry above all the voices.

"A captain ordered all Ottawas to come away. Many Ottawas did not leave the Prayer cabin. It was still, except for two Ottawas who moaned in the corner. A Sioux stopped their moaning.

"I had my eye to a crack in the wall. I saw the frozen river and I saw Ottawas were pushing a birch-bark canoe, all smeared with pitch, under this side of the Prayer cabin. An Ottawa hurled a burning fagot and the canoe blazed up.

"Bear's Head ordered: 'We must leave, brothers. The smoke is towards the river.' We dashed through the door and into the smoke. Three Sioux fell by arrows. Bear's Head was wounded in the shoulder now, but he kept on and I ran at his side. Ugh! I do not know why I was not hit by an arrow. We saw ahead of us a cabin on the edge of the little frozen river that flowed into the lake. Into this cabin we fell and the fighting began again. By this time hundreds of Ottawas were gathering. When Bear's Head saw them he said to me: 'We Sioux are dead men, but these dogs may not kill small slaves. Crow Dog, do you roll down the bank and lie behind this cabin. Get back to our lands and tell my people. It will be a red day for the Ottawas when our Sioux brothers come again to this village that does not honor the calumet and the peace council.'

"These were the last words I ever heard Bear's Head utter, for he pushed me through the torn side of the cabin and I rolled over and over till a snow bank hid me. Here I lay till there was no sound from the cabin where the Sioux ambassadors fought.

Then the cabin burst into flames and it lit up the whole bank of the river. It was terribly cold there. My wound pained me and my whole body was numb. Yet, as soon as it was dark enough, I started to do as Bear's Head had ordered.

"I had crawled the distance from bank to bank of this Great Water, when a dog found me. He barked a warning to his Ottawa master. I was taken and brought back to the village. Now the Ottawas were frightened at what the young warriors had done. That night the elders decided to abandon their village and flee to the east, where they would be beyond the vengeance of the Sioux, who they knew would surely come, like flies at hunting time, and kill and kill and kill.

"A squaw put herbs on my side and then I was put to carrying a bundle, but on the march I escaped and started towards the Sioux lands. I traveled over the snow crust and lived on berries. At night I climbed into trees and sometimes saw hungry, gray wolves passing on some deer's trail. I do not know why they did not pick up my scent.

"Seven days later a war party of Peorias tracked me. They were hunting deer on snow shoes. You know, at snow time the crust will bear up the snow shoes and the dogs, but the sharp hoofs of the deer break through. Ugh! I was glad this party did track me, for I was very weak, and hungry demons gnawed within me. Red Calumet was the captain of this party. He brought me to Moingwena. I became his slave. And now he gives me to the Blackrobe. Sun knows how long I will be with the Blackrobe! I know the tribes down the Great Water are as fierce as the

Sioux. They will kill you and then I will be the slave of another. That is Crow Dog's story. I have told it as my master orders."

The slave boy finished abruptly and Joliet murmured: "The boy gives us pleasant thoughts to dream over."

Father Marquette corrected him: "No, Louis, Crow Dog will escape further capture and he will return with us. But post a sentry. It is time."

Soon the party was stretched out in the black protection of the island.

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CHAPTER VI

THUNDER BIRD

THE expedition looked immensely tiny against the high bluff that sheered up along the left bank. The two canoes had been sweeping by these bluffs for several hours. As usual the fur-capped woodsmen paddled as silently as Indians and Father Marquette in the bow was watching the opening river ahead.

"O Mary Immaculate," he petitioned, as he resumed his paddle, "guide me to the new nations that live along these strange shores and put on my lips words that will make these, your other children, know and love your son." He repeated his favorite prayer, "O Mary Immaculate, Mother of God, Mother of Grace, remember me—and them."

The Blackrobe glanced back and saw that Crow Dog had tired of fondling No Flesh. Now he was crouching down between the bags of Indian corn. He had the expedition's compass before him and he was in the act of sprinkling a handful of tobacco on it.

The slave boy looked up. "Blackrobe, great Manitou in there. Crow Dog offers him tobacco that he will be friendly to you whitemen."

The Blackrobe smiled with pity on the little pagan. "That is no Manitou, Crow Dog. The Manitou Who is friendly to all of us is up there." He pointed to the skies.

Father Marquette was interrupted by a shout from

Crow Dog. No Flesh barked at the sudden cry. Jean and Peter steadied the canoe on her course.

Excitedly the slave boy pointed to the sheer side of the bluff ahead. "Look up, Master, for the Great Demon himself looks down on us. Ugh! We are dead men!"

The boy's shouts had been heard in the other canoe and Joliet gave a command to his woodsmen. With powerful strokes they breasted Marquette's craft.

Side by side the canoes drifted in the full strength of the current that was sweeping them in a mighty curve by the towering cliff. What had caused Crow Dog's alarm was not at first discernible to the rest of the party. But at the boy's repeated cries and gestures, all eyes were focused on the bluff. There on the sheer side, seemingly accessible only to an eagle, was carved the figure of a painted monster.

Without a word the red-sashed woodsmen gazed in awe as the current carried the canoes along and the figure grew larger. All could make it out now. It had a long squat body, covered with scales; square-shouldered wings, also scaled. The face was that of a man. The eyes were red. It had the horns of a deer and was bearded as is a tiger. The serpentine tail wound about the green-scaled body and, passing over the head in a great loop, showed again between the legs, where it terminated in a fish's tail. Gruesomely, in reds and greens and blacks, this monster, that some ancient hand had painted, stared down on the approaching expedition.

Terror was in the hearts of the woodsmen, and Crow Dog had cowered down beside the hound in the bottom of the canoe. Something of his fear had com-

municated itself to the yellowish animal, for the dog began to whimper.

Jean muttered: "This river gets more dangerous. It is only a step from painted beasts that no sober man ever saw before to hungry live ones. Before all Heaven, I declare I wish I was back on the island of Mackinac!"

Father Marquette heard and laughed. "Jean, Jean, if this is the type of monsters that lie in wait for us further downstream, then we are indeed safe and will pass their dens unharmed. I have seen the source of another Indian legend."

René and Charles in Joliet's canoe were paddling furiously and their zeal was caught by Jean. Unaided he propelled the Blackrobe's canoe, and the bark craft fairly skimmed over the waters.

Marquette looked back to note the details of the painted monster and then he happened to notice his cowering slave.

"Crow Dog, straighten up and be a brave. Colored paint and carved stone never yet hurt anybody."

Very reluctantly the slave boy raised his head and peered fearfully over the side of the canoe at the sheer bluff they were skirting. Reassured by the fact that the painted monster was behind them, the boy grinned.

"No Flesh, Master's dog, was trembling so at the sight of that—that—" He paused and the Blackrobe, good-naturedly catching the lad's humor, added: "Thunder Bird."

"Was that the Thunder Bird!" whispered Crow Dog, instinctively casting a startled glance over his left shoulder. "In the cabins of Red Calumet I have

heard the squaws tell their bad children they would call the Thunder Bird. The children would be good then."

The boy cast another glance back at the painted monster, high above them.

"I have heard the legend of this Thunder Bird from an old Pottawattomie chief."

"What was it you heard, Master?" inquired Crow Dog.

"This is what the chief told me."

Encouraged, the small slave crept forward till he was right behind the Blackrobe.

"He said many, many moons ago, when the first Illinois tribe came to this region, there was a monster, all wings and claws and teeth, who lived in the bluffs over the Great Water. This was the Thunder Bird. It would fly to the north and the south. It would fly to the east and the west. It would swoop down like lightning out of a black cloud and in its claws it always held its victim.

"Many children and squaws and warriors even, this Thunder Bird caught, and their cabins knew them no more. This kept up till the tribes met in a great council and deliberated. Some were in favor of leaving the prairies and fleeing beyond the flight of the Thunder Bird."

"Speak louder, my Father," interrupted Jean.

Marquette smiled and raised his voice. "At this council was a young warrior. When he returned from the war path, many captives came with him. Rows of enemies' scalp locks hung in his cabin. He was young, but his exploits had already made him a captain.

"He it was who now arose when the older men of the council were silent. He claimed Sun had sent him this plan in a dream. Let the warriors who were unafraid go with him to the nest of the Thunder Bird when the monster was away. There let them tie him before the rocky cave and hide nearby. When the Thunder Bird returned and saw the victim, it would swoop down. Then let them shoot their arrows with poison tips—a whole cloud of them—into the body of the monster and kill him.

"When the great council heard this warrior's words, the squaws who were sitting behind the braves, raised their Mourning Song. For they thought this young captain was already a dead man."

"Ugh! And that he was, Master," put in Crow Dog most solemnly.

"But this captain," the Blackrobe continued, "bade the squaws stop their song and wipe away their tears, saying it was true he would be dead, but the poisoned arrows would quickly make the Thunder Bird follow him. Then there would be safety for all the tribes in the lands along the Great Water.

"The plan of the young captain was accepted. The bravest captains of the tribes went with him next time the scouts reported that the Thunder Bird was raiding to the north. They tied this captain with his arms free and his legs outstretched, after the manner of captives for the torture. Then they hid behind rocks and trees and in the underbrush that was before the monster's cave.

"A night and almost a day they waited, till a keen-eyed captain saw a black speck in the northern skies.

He told the one lying nearest him and he told the next and all the captains reached over their shoulders for their poison-tipped arrows. They fitted these in their bows and lay hidden.

"Not long did they wait now. The Thunder Bird came swooping down. It was hungry, for all the people in the north had buried themselves in caves and the Thunder Bird had not eaten for three days.

"When it saw the fresh figure of the young captain stretched out before the entrance to its cave, it dropped like a minnow darts and fastened its claws in the body. The captain grasped the cruel claws with his hands and held the Thunder Bird captive.

"At once the other captains rose up, and arrow after arrow buried itself in the struggling two.

"All the tribes came to honor the young captain in his funeral. After they had sung and bound his body in a tree, a mighty council was held. The chiefs decided to make a painting to remember the bravery of this young captain. So the painters stretched the body of the Thunder Bird across the face of a bluff and drew the outline. With reds and greens and blacks they painted in the body and the head and the long twisting tail. And that painting is what we have just seen."

"Master," added Crow Dog, "in Red Calumet's cabin I have heard a sorcerer tell that it is the custom when a warrior passed this place he should shoot a poison arrow at the Thunder Bird."

"And we did not do so," commented Jean, who had been listening attentively to the legend.

Father Marquette was silent for a while and then he seemed to speak his thoughts aloud: "That an-

cient young captain, who sacrificed himself for his people, reminds me of our own Great Captain. He also gave His life for His people and by His death conquered a monster greater than the Thunder Bird; one who feeds, not on the frail passing bodies, but the everlasting souls."

"Master, will you tell me the story of this other Great Captain some time?" hopefully inquired Crow Dog.

"That I will," promised the Blackrobe heartily, "in good time."

When the Thunder Bird was a memory of the morning and the two canoes were paddling side by side, Joliet detected the distant roar of waters. Keeping on, they breasted a point and saw ahead a vast discolored flood pouring into the Great Water. Already their current seemed to quicken and leap to meet this other stream.

All the explorers were alert as they swept towards the muddy line that seemed to move rapidly to cross their bows.

Then the right bank tapered away and there opened before them the wide stretch of another mighty river.

"Ugh! It is a Big Muddy!" exclaimed the slave boy.

They were now out of the clear current they had known since they sighted the River of the Conception, and their canoes were tossed and almost hurled along in the full flood of a June rise.

A painted tepee of strange designs whirled by on a rude raft. Not far off, several bloated buffalo carcasses were sweeping along. White, dead trees, piled

high with an accumulation of drift, threatened the frail crafts. But the expert steering of the woodsmen avoided many collisions.

The Blackrobe thought as he watched these thick trees borne along: "There goes enough wood to furnish my native Laon with fires for three winters!"

A cry of warning from Crow Dog caused Marquette to look about. On one of these stark limbs that stuck out from an almost submerged tree was a frightened wild cat. The tawny animal cowered down much the same way the slave boy had, when they were passing the painted monster hours ago.

The cat noticed the men in the canoe. It rose up and seemed about to leap across the rushing waters, but Jean and the Blackrobe skillfully veered off. The canoe and the cat raced along the muddy tide.

Then ahead appeared another thick-boled driftwood tree. It was directly in the canoe's course. Some of its hidden branches had caught, holding the tree fast. A collar of yellow foam bubbled about it.

Joliet and his woodsmen steered one side and the other canoe veered to the right. This brought the Blackrobe's boat suddenly nearer to the limb on which the wild cat clung. The frightened cat glared for a second and then crouched to spring.

Jean turned the canoe in dangerously close to the snag. A projecting branch almost struck the Blackrobe. Crow Dog shouted as the big cat left the limb. No Flesh stood on guard and snapped at the cat's paws as they just scraped the side of the canoe, and then the muddy current closed over the furry yellow head.

All were below the snag now. But the danger was

not yet over. For the cat reappeared astern and began to swim rapidly after the canoe.

Jean cast one startled look over his shoulder and dug his paddle into the water. Crow Dog, leaning over the side of the frail canoe where the animal's claws had dug deep scratches, screamed a shrill Sioux war cry of satisfaction as the big tawny cat fell further and further astern. Finally, the exhausted animal turned and swam for another bit of driftwood. It clambered up and crouched, glaring at the canoe party, as both were hurled along in the full strength of the rise.

The force of the current of the Big Muddy drove the canoes towards the left bank and as all were exhausted by their narrow escapes from shipwreck, Joilet signaled Marquette to land on the shoulder of the next willow-wooded island.

Crow Dog with No Flesh sought berries and turtle eggs in the sands, while Marquette and Joliet made their calculations, discussing the new discoveries.

Concluded Father Marquette: "Louis, I have hardly any doubt this muddy river, whose mouth we have just crossed in safety, leads to other rivers. Their waters must flow into the land of California and empty into the Vermilion Sea."

The Blackrobe placed his hand on his companion's arm. "Some day, I do not despair of exploring its length if God only grants me the grace and the health to do so. Ah! Louis, if you but knew how I long to preach the Gospel to the copper-skinned children along these mighty streams of this fair New World. Poor souls! They are overlong under the dominion of Thunder Birds."

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CHAPTER VII

FOUND IN THE GRASS

FOLLOWING the wide muddy current of the unknown river as it swung from bank to bank in tremendous sweeps that were a league in length, the expedition was now sailing close under the western shore, where a new yellow line of bluffs, heavily wooded, rose almost perpendicularly into the sky. A canvas sail had been rigged up in each canoe to take full advantage of the stiff breeze that blew downstream.

It was an easy day for the woodsmen and, though none of the party had sighted Indians since leaving the Peorias, all were as ever on the alert with their muskets lying handy on the supply bags.

They came upon many white pelicans and once they saw, strutting about on the eastern bank, hundreds of turkeys. A short stop was made and three were shot.

An hour later they swept close under a point. Shortly below, as though the high bluff had been cut in twain by a mighty scissors, the towering bank fell away and they were looking up a narrow green valley.

The quick eye of Crow Dog was the first to sight the small figure that sat on the low bank under a huge cottonwood, not more than several hundred feet from the approaching canoes.

He was a copper-hued boy with but an amulet on his breast and he was fishing. He still sat watching his lines as the silent party in the canoes swept down upon him.

At Marquette's whispered command, Crow Dog shouted in Illinois. No Flesh barked excitedly. The strange fisher boy leapt up. He hooked a string of glistening fish out of the water. Then like a startled young buck he hurled himself backwards into the brush to disappear over the bank.

"Let us stop," shouted Marquette to Joliet in the other craft. "Where there is a boy fishing, there must be other Indians."

Jean dropped the sail and paddled the canoe quickly into the yellow eddy under the bank. As the boat swung about, Marquette and Crow Dog caught an overhanging limb and brought the canoe up sharply.

"Come with me," the Blackrobe called to the slave boy. No Flesh needed no invitation, and the three climbed up the bank.

Over the top they saw a sparsely wooded grove up the narrow valley, and in the middle distance the copper-hued boy running towards a man, who was bending over a fire cooking his meal.

When the older Indian saw Marquette, he checked the speeding boy and, grabbing up his bow, started to run forward.

The Blackrobe stopped and, raising his right hand in the peace gesture, awaited the man's approach. At once the Indian halted.

"We come in peace," the Blackrobe shouted in Illinois.

The strange Indian answered in the same tongue,

and Marquette learnt these were a Tuscarora father and son out hunting.

On the Blackrobe's invitation the two hunters came down to the bank. The Indian told the voyagers that a large Tuscarora hunting party was camped downstream, and the buffaloes were plentiful only a league away.

It was decided that Joliet and the woodsmen should hunt buffaloes, as the expedition's supply of meat was low. The Indian father for a present of beads volunteered to go with Joliet.

After the woodsmen had departed, Marquette read his breviary and then he discovered Crow Dog and the Tuscarora lad talking at a great rate. Both had lines in the river and were eating blueberries.

The Blackrobe drew near and, sitting on the bank, inquired: "Crow Dog, what is this mighty racket that I hear over here between you and your new friend?"

The slave boy smiled through blue-stained lips and explained seriously: "Blackrobe, I was warning this Tuscarora boy, because he does not know that the Great Hare, who invented nets for fishing by watching the spider weave his web, forbade us to throw the bones of dead fish on the fire. The spirits of dead fish pass into live fish. These will be offended and they will not come to his lines. This a great sorcerer of the Sioux told me. Found in the Grass did not know this."

"Nonsense! The spirits of dead fish do not pass into live fish, so it does not matter what you do with their bones."

The slave boy looked fearsomely about him as

though he expected to catch the Great Hare overhearing the Blackrobe's rash words. "Master, you have no sense. You say that and you will anger the Great Hare. He will sink your canoes and we shall all be dead men."

Father Marquette laughed heartily and said: "Crow Doggie, when you begin to fear that way, say: 'The Great Hare is a demon and I despise him.' "

The Blackrobe turned to the small Tuscarora who had been listening most intently. "Found in the Grass! So that's your name, is it?"

The boy nodded.

Crow Dog put in patronizingly. "This Found in the Grass is out on his first buffalo hunt. His father has taken him. Listen, Master, Found in the Grass will tell you what he did yesterday."

The slim Tuscarora was not unwilling.

"Whiteman, I left the main hunting party yesterday morning while it was very dark. He Hurls a Good Spear, who is my father, took me. We walked while the sun climbed high in the skies. Then we came to a small ridge and beyond were the buffaloes, like the whitecaps on the Great River when the wind blows against the current. More than that even.

"He Hurls a Good Spear loosened his hunting bow and I loosened mine. We both crept like two snakes, a big one and a little one, through the grass. The wind was blowing from the herd towards us, which is right.

"When we had come within the flight of an arrow from a grazing buffalo, my father whispered, 'No, let him go. He is too old. He is not good to eat.' So we crept around the edge of the herd, never showing

ourselves, till my father sighted a young bull, which was eating grass and had very foolishly strayed from the herd. My father said Sun made him do such a foolish thing that we might fill our bellies.

"We crept nearer and my father sent me to go beyond the young buffalo and when I heard my father give the cry of the duck twice, I was to stand up and show myself to the young buffalo. I crept around so silently that the birds did not fly up. Then I heard the cry of the duck twice and I rose up. The young buffalo winded me and he twitched his tail and started to move slowly towards the grass where my father lay hidden. I advanced closer and the young buffalo moved faster. When he came within easy arrow flight, my father stood up and, all in the same motion, let fly his first arrow. As quickly as the wild cat strikes, my father shot another and another and another arrow. They all clustered as close together as grass grows, just behind the shoulder of the buffalo.

"The bull wheeled to charge, as they do when wounded, but my father had disappeared in the grass. The young buffalo did not go more than five times his length, when his knees gave out and his shaggy head sank down to the earth.

"Before it reached the prairie grass, my father glided to the buffalo's side and struck with his knife. It was done so quickly that the rest of the herd, grazing not so far away, went on grazing. The buffaloes have no sense, whiteman.

"When I came creeping up to He Hurls a Good Spear, he had already begun to cut out the tongue.

The young buffalo was lean, so we did not take any more meat from him."

Here Crow Dog got a bite and in triumph landed a three-pound catfish. As it flopped on the wet bank, Found in the Grass struck it expertly and the fish lay still.

The Tuscarora boy continued: "Then my turn came. I had never hunted a buffalo before and I was very anxious to kill one. We glided through the grass till He Hurls a Good Spear sighted a half-grown calf. It had no sense, for it was grazing too far from its squaw.

"This time I lay low in the grass and my father glided around as softly as a breath of wind. I watched through the opening between two stones till the calf twitched its tail. Then I gave the cry of the duck twice and my father let the calf see him.

"The calf was excited. It came dashing near where I lay. I rose up and shot my arrows. The first hit the calf in the flank. The second and third were nearer the shoulder, but too low. One was good though, for it broke a foreleg.

"Some of the calf's excitement got into me. I stood watching and forgot to drop into the grass. That was a foolish thing to do, for the struggling calf called its mother and the old squaw buffalo wheeled and saw me.

"I should have dropped into the grass, but this was my buffalo and I did not wish to lose my first kill. All the boys in my village would jeer at me if He Hurls a Good Spear told them I had missed. For I am very good with the bow and arrow. So I

ran on and plunged my bone knife into the spot that reaches the calf's heart.

"Then I heard the squaw buffalo charging. I never knew a squaw buffalo could run so fast. I started to run. My father shouted: 'Lie down!' But just then my flying legs caught in a prairie dog's hole and I pitched head first.

"I felt the ground tremble and heard the old squaw breathing heavily. Then the breathing stopped and my father was beside me. He helped me to my feet and I looked about me.

"There, with its head close up to the prairie dog's hole, lay the squaw buffalo and four of my father's arrows were so close together, just behind the left shoulder, that the palm of my hand would cover the place where the stone tipped heads had entered the buffalo's side.

"My hunting amulet that my father's squaw hung about my neck when I left my village had saved me.

"He Hurls a Good Spear said I had no sense, but when he went back to where the calf lay and he saw the bone hilt of my knife sticking out, he said I had a little sense. I did not mind what my father said, for I had killed my first buffalo!

"This morning I killed another young calf and my four arrows all struck right. This, whiteman, is what I told your slave."

"He Hurls a Good Spear has taught you well," complimented the Blackrobe. Then he requested: "Found in the Grass, there is your bow and quiver, and yonder on that cottonwood is your mark. Show Crow Dog and me a sample of your marksmanship."

The small Tuscarora sprang up and slipped his cougar-tail quiver over his shoulder.

"Whiteman, have your slave touch the spot where the arrows should cluster."

Crow Dog dropped his lines and raced about fifteen paces to the tree. He reached out and touched a torn strip of bark, no larger than an apple.

"Now, whiteman," demanded Found in the Grass, "tell me where I must stand."

"Just where you are."

At the words, Found in the Grass fitted an arrow, the bow twanged, and as swiftly as a snake strikes, the boy reached back for another arrow and sped it on its way. Then another.

The three arrowheads pinned the bark to the cottonwood. So close were they that Crow Dog with difficulty inserted his index finger between the three heads.

Father Marquette went to his canoe and gave the small archer a string of beads, similar to the ones Crow Dog wore.

"The boys in my village," Found in the Grass boasted, "have many games with the bow and arrow. That is how we learn. Sometimes a boy will shoot an arrow up into a tree till it lodges there. Then the others shoot at this arrow and the one who knocks it down gets all the arrows.

"But the game I like best is when three boys shoot arrows. A warrior counts and the boy who has the most arrows in the air at once wins all the arrows. I have won many arrows. I have had six arrows in the air at one time."

"Among the Sioux, when I was with my master,

Bear's Head," put in Crow Dog, "the boys played a game in autumn that I liked."

"What was that?" The Blackrobe was interested.

"The Sioux boys make small arrows of green switches before the leaves fall. These switch arrows they stick into the fire till the end is charred to a point. Then the boys play the dogs are buffaloes. Some stalk them about the cabins, while the rest lie in the grass by the bank where the thirsty dogs will come to get a drink. The dogs do not charge like bull buffaloes. They howl and run away. But sometimes a squaw who owns a dog will charge. Then the boys run away."

"And if the squaw catch a boy?" laughed the Blackrobe.

"She will drag him to the water and duck him. That is a way to punish the boys."

"Then I know the boys in those villages are more obedient in wintertime than in summer." the Tuscarora boy observed wisely.

"You speak right words, Found in the Grass," Crow Dog assured him. "Ugh! The boys are obedient when the water is very cold. They do not obey much in summertime."

"There is another bow and arrow game we call 'Buffalo Lights.' The boys of my village play this at hunting time," Found in the Grass volunteered.

The Blackrobe listened attentively.

"In the evening after the hunt, the boys cut a strip of green hide from one of the slain buffaloes and to this they attach lights. The boys with the bows and arrows stand ready in a big circle. Then a swift runner, whom we call Boy Setting Grass On

Fire By His Footsteps, starts with the strip. The other boys shoot at the lights as he passes. Sometimes Boy Setting Grass On Fire By His Footsteps swings the strip with the lights around and around his head as he runs. Then it is more difficult to hit the lights.

"After he passes on, the boys who have shot their quiver would leave the circle and seek for their arrows. If Boy Setting Grass On Fire By His Footsteps comes around while they are searching, he strikes at them with the lights. If he hits one, that boy has to take the strip. Buffalo Lights is very exciting."

The Blackrobe and the two boys were interrupted by a shout from the valley. They spun about and saw Peter, the woodsman. Behind him appeared René and Francis. They were supporting He Hurls a Good Spear.

Found in the Grass ran to his father's side. The Tuscarora hunter had been painfully gored by a wounded bull buffalo.

Marquette and Joliet decided to leave the wounded man on the bank with Found in the Grass and get him assistance.

So the two canoes were loaded with buffalo steaks and started down the Great Water to where He Hurls a Good Spear said they would find the main Tuscarora hunting party.

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CHAPTER VIII

STANDS FIRST

THE Blackrobe got out his glasses and with them scanned the lower reach of the bend the two canoes were entering. He saw the distant brownish current was making a crossing to the dense wooded bluff on the left bank. Then into the circle of his vision swept a grove of tall cottonwoods. A mud-bank glistened beneath the trees, and long lances of sunlight played on a group of tiny copper-skinned figures.

Without mentioning his discovery, he handed the glasses back to his slave boy.

"Here, Crow Dog, take what my Ottawas used to call 'Makes Far Away Come Near' and tell me what you see."

The slave boy hesitated to touch the instrument.

"Blackrobe Master, is there a good demon or a bad demon in this?"

Marquette laughed and reassured the boy. "There is neither. But looking through this you will have the eyes of the eagle."

"And I will not lose my own eyes so that it always will be black night with me?"

"No, indeed. That I promise you."

"Master has not a split tongue. I will look."

Still doubtful, Crow Dog put the glasses to his eyes and gazed where he was directed.

"What does Crow Dog see downstream?"

"I see trees but they blur more than in a fog. If this is the way the eagle sees things, I do not wish, Master, to have the eyes of the eagle."

Marquette readjusted the glasses and Crow Dog shouted: "Ugh! Now I have eyes like the Thunder Bird!"

"What do you see?"

"Master, there are boys diving into the Great Water. Some are sliding down a mudchute. There are more than I have fingers on my hands swimming in the yellow water. With the Eagle's Eye I see the boys and they do not see me. This is the swimming place Found in the Grass told me all about. All the Tuscarora boys play there at hunting time."

Crow Dog lowered the glasses and peered ahead at the lower end of the bend. "Now I do not see them. Ugh! There is a great demon in these and I will ——"

Before the Blackrobe could stop him the slave boy reached into a tobacco pouch and took a pinch of tobacco. This he sprinkled on the glasses, saying most solemnly: "Demon of the Eagle Eyes, this I offer to you that you will be friendly to me and my Master."

Quietly the Blackrobe threw the glasses out of focus.

"Look again, Crow Doggie."

The slave boy put the glasses to his eyes. "The Great Water—the cottonwoods—the boys have gone away! I see nothing but a blur. The Demon wants more tobacco."

"Do not do that, Crow Dog," remonstrated Father

Marquette as the small slave reached into the pouch. "This is only a creature of glass and metal that clever whitemen have made to see at a distance. Do not waste good tobacco on it. There is no Demon here."

The Blackrobe readjusted the focus. "Now look and far away will come near again."

Doubtfully Crow Dog took the glasses this time, but a smile of relief spread over his features as the mudbank and the bathing boys once more swept into his vision.

"Blackrobe Master, you are a Manitou and all the demons obey you. I offer this tobacco to you."

"No. No, you Crazy Puppy! Don't do that!" hastily objected the Blackrobe. "But keep watching through 'Eagle Eyes' and tell me when the young swimmers notice us in the canoes."

Father Marquette called his discovery across to Joliet. "Louis, the Tuscarora hunting party we seek is located in the lower reach of this bend."

Suddenly the watching Crow Dog shouted: "Eagle's Eyes tells me that the boys have seen us. For four are standing on the mudbank and pointing this way. Now one of them is running towards the cottonwoods. He is disappearing in the shadows. He has gone to tell the hunters two strange canoes are coming. The boys in the water are all splashing ashore."

Crow Dog handed the glasses to Father Marquette. He saw a dozen copper-skinned boys were scrambling out of the water and retreating to the top of the mudbank. As he gazed further down, several Tuscarora warriors came out of the cottonwood shadows.

Soon the increasing crowd of Tuscaroras were vis-

ible to the naked eye. The glint of the sun on weapons could now be seen. As his custom was, the Blackrobe repeated his favorite prayer, "O Mary Immaculate. Mother of God. Mother of Grace. Remember us."

Joliet gave an order and the woodsmen loaded their muskets and laid their powder horns at hand.

Still paddling fifty yards off the right bank of the Great Water, the canoes rapidly closed up the distance between them and the waiting warriors.

Then the expedition was sweeping by the mudbank where the Tuscarora boys had first been sighted. A smooth mudchute, still wet, cut through this. But there was no sign of the boys.

Crow Dog whispered: "Master, they are hiding in the canebrake. Look close behind that bush with the red berries. See that boy's leg. He has no sense; because his head is hidden he thinks we cannot see the rest of him. An arrow would soon teach him a little sense."

"Well, don't shoot it, for we might have an hundred returned," cautioned the Blackrobe.

As the canoes passed downstream, over the edge of the mudbank popped the black-haired heads of half a dozen boys, bedraggled turkey-feather bonnets drooped over their ears.

Father Marquette waved and instantly the heads bobbed back out of sight.

Then Joliet suggested: "I do not like the looks of those redmen below. I am of a mind to fire a shot in the air to let them know we carry thunder-sticks."

"Keep our powder till the last," Father Mar-

quette advised. "We come in peace and we have yet to make use of the gift the Great Captain of the Peorias gave us."

The Blackrobe drew the plumed calumet from the bag where it rested at his side and, kneeling up in the bow of his canoe, held the gay plumed peace pipe.

Crow Dog shouted: "Look back at the mudbank now, Master."

The Blackrobe glanced over his shoulder and saw a line of copper-skinned boys plunge in and begin swimming after the expedition. Some of the smaller boys clung to driftwood and let the muddy current carry them along.

Shrill shouts came from the cluster of Tuscarora warriors who stood to their waists in the water, now less than seventy yards below the canoes.

Marquette held high the long pipe with its stem decorated with the bright wings and necks of birds. He noticed that a Tuscarora, who wore the eagle feathers of a chief, gave a command and the men in the water were suddenly quiet. Only the splash of the woodsmen's paddles broke the silence as the canoes sped along.

The main current had already begun to sweep to the further shore, and with a few swift strokes the canoes were out of it and in the eddy. The woodsmen held the crafts there, while Marquette raised high his calumet.

He shouted in Huron: "We come, brothers, we come in peace." He saw that his words were not understood.

Then the Blackrobe uttered the same expression in Illinois.

The Tuscarora chief advanced to the water line and answered in Illinois: "Whiteman, who carries the calumet of peace, come ashore, you and your brothers."

The warriors made a little semicircle as the canoes were gently beached in their midst. At once Marquette told the chief: "Brothers, we have only peaceful desires in our hearts. Your brother, He Hurls a Good Spear, has been gored by a charging buffalo. We promised him to come and tell you that you may go to him and help him."

While the Blackrobe was telling where the wounded hunter could be found, the boys, who had swum from the mudchute, came splashing ashore and pushed into the group that surrounded the whitemen.

A long rough dugout, that had been concealed in the canebrake, was hauled out and slid across the glistening sands into the water. Several Tuscarora squaws immediately started paddling upstream after their wounded tribesman.

Leaving the woodsmen on guard, Marquette and Joliet accepted the chief's invitation to come to the cabins. A well-worn trail led south through the cottonwoods. Ahead rose a bluff that faced the lower river and, nearer, a prairie rolled to the horizon. Nestling under the shelter of the bluff was a hunting village of reed-roofed cabins. Many squaws were everywhere busy over small fires, smoking and bundling strips of buffalo meat.

Passing through the hunting village, Joliet whispered to Marquette: "My Father, these Tuscaroras come into occasional contact with whitemen. Look about you and note the iron hatchets and knives.

See the hoes lying against the side of that cabin, and mark you, my Father, the cloth some of the squaws wear is not of Indian make. That cloth and those glass-bead ornaments come from Europeans."

"Those articles are not of French make, nor yet English," the Blackrobe replied. "These red children have some contact with the Spanish."

When Marquette and Joliet were seated on reed mats in the principal hunting cabin of the Tuscaroras, buffalo tenderloins were served them on shell dishes. Then bear's grease, white plums, and wild grapes were brought in.

After the feasting, Marquette and his companion smoked the calumet with the older men and presented the chief a gift of some awls and iron fish hooks.

The Blackrobe learnt that hunting parties came not infrequently here from the Tuscarora lands to the west. Nearby was a ravine, named "Buffaloes' Leap," where herds were slaughtered. Only that morning fifty had been driven over the cliff.

The chief, Stands First, answering Marquette's request for information about the lower river, said: "Whiteman with the black robe, our warriors in search of enemies have paddled many days downstream and have not seen its mouth. But we know on the lower reaches of the Great Water there live other men whose skin is the color of your skin."

"How does my brother, Stands First, know that?" questioned the Blackrobe.

"Because our enemies downstream took two of our warriors captive five moons ago. These two escaped the torture when whitemen came suddenly on our

enemies. The whitemen did not kill our brothers, but took them further downstream and they saw the great village of the whitemen. There they saw many hatchets and beads and cloth that we desire very much. The whitemen trade these articles to the people downstream and these latter trade them to us.

"These whitemen build cabins on top of cabins and their canoes are as big as many cottonwoods with sails like clouds in the sky.

"You have been kind to He Hurls a Good Spear, when he was wounded by a charging bull, and we wish to repay your kindness. So we warn you to go back to your own country. For further down the Great Water, nearer than these men whose skin is the color of your skin, are very warlike tribes. These are our blood enemies, the Chickasaws. They will not respect the calumet you carry. They have fast canoes, longer than your two put end to end. They have thundersticks against which our arrows are as useless as falling leaves. These Chickasaws torture and kill all who come into their stretch of the river.

"Yesterday Tuscarora warriors crossed the Great Water lower down to meet a raiding party of Chickasaws. We await our brothers' return with many scalps. We do not fear the Chickasaws, for we are warriors and many. But you are fewer than the fingers on my hands. So, whiteman with the black robe, my heart makes me warn you to turn the bows of your canoes to the north, while yet you grow your scalp locks. The captives of the Chickasaws welcome death long before it comes to them."

Marquette thanked Stands First for his words of

warning, but he assured him his little party was determined to venture further down the river.

Then in Illinois the Blackrobe spoke to the circle of Tuscarora chiefs: "Even though these Chickasaws to the south do not respect the peace calumet, yet I come to bring to you and to them the Prayer of Him Who made Heaven and Earth. Greater than your Sun is He, for He made the sun and the moon and the stars. And He made you and He made me."

The Blackrobe explained to them "the Great Manitou," and when he concluded, Stands First asked gravely:

"We see the Manitou of the whitemen has put wise words on your tongue. Tell me this. Our sorcerers have not answered it. Is the body of one dreaming, alive or dead? I ask the whiteman in the black robe."

"It is alive, Stands First," the Blackrobe replied, "for it is the soul that makes the body alive. If the soul left the body in sleep, then the body would be dead as those buffalo carcasses I saw outside."

"Tell me further," persisted the chief, "is it not with eyes we see what is represented in dreams?—a buffalo grazing, a Chickasaw creeping up to the attack, my squaw weaving a bag of buffalo hair?"

"Not with our eyes, my brother, for they are covered with darkness and see nothing while we dream. So it is the soul which makes us see in dreams. And it must be present within our body, just as eyes are in our head, and we see objects in the daytime. If your soul left your body in dreams of hunting or war, have you ever, on waking, found a scalp or a

bear or a slain buffalo on your mat? Why did not your soul bring something back?''

Stands First replied that he did not know and he repeated his invitation to the Blackrobe to stay with them.

''That I cannot do this time,'' Marquette explained, ''for I must see the other tribes down the Great Water. But I make you this promise. Before many moons I, or another whiteman who prays and instructs, will come paddling down the river and will stay in your cabins and will tell you all about the Prayer and the things you wish to know.''

With this promise Marquette again thanked the Tuscaroras for their feast and he presented Stands First with a small silver medal of Mary Immaculate.

The chief took it and, attaching it to the necklace of eagle claws he wore, said: ''This gift of the whiteman in the blackrobe I will wear in my cabins and on the hunt and on the warpath. I will carry it in my war amulet.''

Then the council broke up.

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CHAPTER IX

THE DEVIL'S CABIN

NEXT morning the voyagers were hardly out of sight of the Tuscarora hunting party when Crow Dog began excitedly to tell Father Marquette what he had learnt.

"Blackrobe Master, I fear that all in these canoes are dead men! This I know."

"Tell me why you believe our lives are forfeited this time?" smiled the Blackrobe.

"I was with Found in the Grass when they brought his father to the village and you were at the feast in the Captain's cabin. I went with him and other boys to that mudchute upstream. When we were swimming back to the village, that Tuscarora boy said not to go downstream. He said if we did, soon we would paddle past the mouth of a wide river that flows into the Great Water from the east. And below that is the place men call Where the Devils Snore."

"If they are asleep, how can they hurt you and me, Crow Doggie?"

But the slave boy went on most earnestly: "Found in the Grass said—and the sorcerers' boys said the same—that many monsters worse than the Thunder Bird live there. They told me all. You can hear Where the Devils Snore from a great distance. The devils bar the way downstream and they swallow up

those who dare to go closer. They have eaten many Tuscaroras and canoes together. What chance have we! We are dead men, Master."

Father Marquette petted his little slave on the shoulder reassuringly. "Found in the Grass and his fellow swimmers have vivid imaginations. Or, rather, they are improving on some sorcerers' and squaws' tales they heard in the cabins. Remember, all the demons in your imagination cannot hurt one black hair on your head, Crow Dog. You will see that when we come to these loudly sleeping 'devils.' "

But the boy was not convinced, and when later on the following day the expedition swept down the middle of the broad river by the mouth of another great river (Ohio), the small slave kept his eyes fearfully alert as each distant bluff drew near.

Late in the afternoon when the woodsmen had rigged up their sails again, Marquette noticed the current was quickening. They were well in a bend and racing close under a towering bluff. Ahead appeared a small cove surrounded by jagged rocks, twenty feet high. An island just below threw the water back and it sought its outlet in a narrow channel between this island and the bank.

The roar of the imprisoned waters came to their ears.

"This is Where the Devils Snore! This is the Devils' Cabin!" Crow Dog kept crying as he hugged the hound, No Flesh. "Found in the Grass was right. Now the monsters will eat us and our canoes!"

No one paid any attention to the boy's alarms. The sails had been dropped, and all were steering to shoot the narrow channel safely. The bark crafts

were swept along without the urge of paddles. The jagged rocks at the cove's entrance were breasted and cleared by inches. Then into the crooked chute of water between the island and the shore the expedition was hurled. For ten dangerous minutes the canoes seemed to fly by lofty cottonwoods, overhanging willows, and dense canebrake.

When the canoes came out into the broad river again, all were exhausted and glad to drift.

"I saw the demons! They almost had us." Crow Dog kept shouting to the Blackrobe.

Father Marquette laughed. "If those are the only demons you ever see, you are a lucky boy. There were worse 'demons' under the water than in that cove. It is Mary Immaculate's protection that kept those ugly rocks and snags from ripping the bottom out of our canoes."

Here Joliet paddled alongside and, in a conference on the middle of the Great Water, it was decided to go ashore at the first favorable looking spot and repair the canoes.

Ahead on the left bank, where a grim bluff abruptly receded, there was, growing down to the water's edge, a fringe of willows.

Swinging closer to the dense green shore, the voyagers noticed that buzzard after buzzard sailed up lazily from these willows.

"Where buzzards gather, dead men are." Jean quoted the Indian proverb and he shook his head doubtfully. "To my way of thinking, good Father Marquette, if the boy's demons don't get all of us, it's only a question of time when those foul birds will."

But the Blackrobe smiled and kept his glasses on the lonely spot where it had been decided to disembark.

Marquette's canoe had come under a low cutbank that was fifty yards upstream from the willows, when the suspicious Crow Dog shouted: "What's that! Blackrobe!—Woodsmen,—look!" The slave boy pointed with trembling finger.

What had seemed to be a decaying log on the sands was gliding towards the water. With a splash it disappeared.

Peter explained to Charles and Jean: "I saw it with the eyes God gave me! It was an animal the color of a toad and shaped like the greatest lizard I ever saw. And its mouth! Holy Mother, protect me from it! It was all mouth in front and it was armed with two rows of teeth, crueller than those of any boar in Christendom!"

While Peter was talking, Joliet and the woodsmen reached for their muskets.

"Though I never have seen one before," observed Father Marquette, "that answers the description of one of those creatures travelers tell us they have out in India. There, they call them crocodiles."

While all were watching, a section of the cutbank ten yards upstream slopped into the current. As the noise subsided, the snout of an alligator came to the surface near Joliet's canoe. René and Charles fired, but their shots were deflected and buried themselves in the freshly exposed bank.

At the sound of the twin explosions there were movements along the bank and "log" after "log" came to quick life and slid under the yellow surface

of the Great Water. Big black buzzards were rising with flapping wings, till Marquette counted nearly fifty. He noticed they rose heavily and soon returned to roost in other tree tops. It was unearthly still in that willow grove.

Joliet's canoe was leaking so badly now that although all of the party were of a mind to get away from this uncanny place, they were forced to beach the canoe.

René and Francis stood on guard with their flintlocks across their arms, while the other woodsmen worked feverishly repairing the leaks.

After a while, Crow Dog, with No Flesh at his heels, wandered off in search of berries. Within five minutes he came back on the run. In his hand he carried an arrow, barbed at the tip with a stone sharpened into the shape of a snake's tongue. He whispered hurriedly into the Blackrobe's ear.

Marquette called quietly to Joliet. They had not followed the slave boy many paces into the dense willow silences till they came upon the underbrush all trampled down.

"Men have fought here!" Crow Dog exclaimed. "Look at No Flesh! He knows."

The hound had dropped his tail and was crouching close to the Blackrobe's moccasins.

"Whoever they were, they fought furiously," Joliet added after his hasty inspection.

Marquette took a few steps towards a decaying tree. He started, for he had almost stumbled over the body of a naked savage. A swift examination revealed that he had been tomahawked and his scalp lock was missing.

A buzzard rose with much flapping of wings from a nearby willow. Then another and another bird. The noise sounded uncannily loud in the still shadowy grove.

Marquette walked beyond the fallen tree and came to where the willows thinned. He counted six bodies of Indians. They lay in a heap as they had been slain and scalped.

The two whitemen gazed about them in observant silence. On every side of the thinning willow grove were mute signs of a losing struggle—split stone tomahawks; innumerable arrows buried in the boles of trees; bent bright feathers among the leaves; a broken necklace strung with the claws and teeth of a monster bear; a drooping buzzard, pinned by an arrow to the branch of a tree; trampled striplings; a massive warclub shaped like a cutlass with a deer's horn embedded in the wooden ball; discarded war amulets, and on the sands ominous stains and the crowded footprints where fierce greased warriors had grappled toe to toe.

A very silent Crow Dog and a cowed No Flesh followed the two whitemen beyond the willow grove. Over a little rise the prairie rolled away to a distant fringe of woods. Here, nearby, another grim tale unfolded before their alert eyes.

In this clearing, under a cloud of myriad insects, were five charred stakes and, still hanging to them, sagging down upon the scattered grayish ashes, with their faces vermilion painted for the torture, were the partly consumed bodies of five captive warriors.

The fires were dead, no wisp of smoke played in the gentle breeze. Blackened sticks, and hatchets

that had been heated redhot lay on the cold ashes. It was as still as the stars, but for the hum and buzz of the myriad insects.

"I think, my Father," Joliet broke the tense stillness, "we have stumbled upon Stands First's unfortunate Tuscarora war party that went to check the raiding Chickasaws. I judge these captives were tortured not more than three days ago."

Marquette looked pityingly about the vivid scene. "These unfortunate Tuscaroras were evidently ambushed shortly after they landed on this side of the Great Water. No wonder, Louis mine, gorged buzzards arose and crocodiles glided into the water when we came ashore."

From the grove came the who-whooping of a whippoorwill. Crow Dog cried fearfully: "If Blackrobe Master has sense he will leave this place quickly. The Chickasaws may not be far off."

The slave boy started to run back to the shelter of the Great Water's bank.

Joliet had gone close to the victims and he exclaimed: "The devils! For fiendish cruelty look here, my Father!"

But Marquette stood where he was and called: "No, Louis; nothing would be gained by examining closely the work of these benighted brothers of ours. We can do nothing for these Tuscaroras. They have died bravely and I hope received mercy from Him, Who sees all hearts."

The Blackrobe and his companion retraced their steps, leaving the circling buzzards to settle. As they walked along, Louis Joliet observed: "Those Chicka-

saws might have ambushed us instead of the Tuscaroras!"

Marquette reminded him: "We voyage under more powerful protection than the Tuscaroras did. Mary Immaculate, to whose honor I dedicated this river and voyage, guards her own faithfully."

Half way through the willow grove they heard a shot, followed by the exultant shouts of Crow Dog and the excited barking of the yellow hound.

On the shore they saw the slave boy executing a war dance and the woodsmen gathering in one spot. In the shallow water, floating belly up, and still thrashing with its tail was a six-foot alligator.

Quickly Peter disengaged his red sash and threw a loop over the tail. He hauled the alligator onto the sand. Here Francis and Charles with tomahawks finished it.

Jean was explaining: "My Father!—Sieur!—I saw its snout showing above the surface and I took careful aim and here it is!"

"If this is the animal Found in the Grass told me about," Crow Dog broke into the conversation, "its tongue is delicious to eat."

"My little boy," Jean promised, "you'll have it when we cook tonight, and welcome you are to it!

"Cut it out for the boy's supper, Francis," he ordered, and added: "I'd starve to death before a piece of that animal or devil passes my lips!"

The other woodsmen nodded hearty approval of their companion's words.

Then the Blackrobe told of the grim story that lay unfolded the other side of the willow grove.

When, half an hour later, the woodsmen returned

to the shore, it was the unanimous verdict that the night's camping ground should be further down the river.

Crow Dog summed up the general opinion when he said: "Blackrobe Master, where the bodies of the Tuscaroras are, will be buzzards, and these water monsters like that one Jean shot, will come at night. Ugh! They will crawl over us while we sleep! Maybe, Master, they will not know the difference between sleeping and being dead. There will be wolves also at night. Master is wise to go further down the river, for this place surely is another Devil's Cabin!"

So after the meal of buffalo meat and corn, with the white plums that Stands First had given them, were eaten, the two canoes dropped down the wide silent river.

But the explorers might as well have stayed at their first landing place, for the mosquitoes and gnats, that seemed to attack only the eyes, found them. Much sleep was impossible.

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CHAPTER X

FALLING TREES

THE next afternoon the sun disappeared while the expedition was out on the broad bosom of the Great Water. Clouds, yellow and black, came over the western bank. It became a race for shelter and, while the two canoes were still several hundred yards from the shore of the long thick-timbered island ahead, the wind was upon them. In no time the brown current was whipped into brown foam, and the canoes began to take in water.

Fortunately the woodsmen won and, once under the lee of the island, they were able to paddle safely and make a landing on a narrow shingle.

The clouds upstream had changed to blue black, ripped with lightning, and were racing along. Quickly the woodsmen with their tomahawks cut down striplings and threw together a rude shelter. Then the rains were upon them.

Fires were out of the question. All were drenched to the skin by the flying spray. So darkness fell on the cold and hungry voyagers. Nobody slept and no watch was necessary. Hour after hour, the expedition listened to the thunder, and in every vivid lightning flash saw further destruction.

About midnight the advancing water forced a change of camp site. Joliet ordered the woodsmen to remove all the bags of records and supplies and

store them on the ridge of the island. Two feet of raging current hurled itself over the spot where the whitemen had first encamped. A blinding flash revealed the channel between the island and the shore. The flood was whirled along, its surface thick with yellowcaps.

The Blackrobe heard Crow Dog chanting in his terror: "The river demons will eat the island! The river demons will eat us!" The hound No Flesh was crouched at the slave boy's feet, terror-stricken by the incessant batteries of thunder overhead.

Crow Dog shouted in Marquette's ear: "I know a way to appease the river demon," and he was off. The Blackrobe saw the boy reach down and gather up the cowering hound in his arms. Blackness descended. In the play of lightning Marquette saw Crow Dog standing on the bank. He was in the act of hurling No Flesh into the flood. Blackness again once more. When the next lightning forked the skies, the hound was struggling helplessly and being hurried along down the waters, while the slave boy had his arms raised in supplication.

Then the rising flood and the gale began to fell trees. Crash after crash, louder than the storm, noise sounded from the timbered blackness about them. Bending trees threatened the party. Through the slanting veils of driven rain another jagged flash revealed a tall cottonwood that had stood on the bluff of the western shore of the island, hurled into the mad waters. As blackness descended on the drenched voyagers, a tree not fifteen feet from where they huddled was struck by lightning and crashed through the

undergrowth. Its branches scratched several of the woodsmen.

It was impossible to hear each other with the ear-splitting, appalling thunder peals. Father Marquette gave general absolution and awaited what was to come with a prayer on his lips.

Many times before the welcome dawn grayed in the east, the woodsmen thought that the expedition had come to an end.

But the coming of light brought the knowledge of further disaster. Crow Dog tried to shout his discovery at the Blackrobe. Then he pointed towards the general wreckage that was strewn on all sides. The two canoes were nowhere in sight! This catastrophe forced the dripping woodsmen out of their leaking shelter. The storm was forgotten in the news of this loss. Out into the driving spray and rain all went. But they soon found that any passage through the tangled and destroyed growths on the island was impossible.

With the advancing day the terrible storm died down. Soon with flint and steel a welcome fire was kindled and soothing pipes were lit.

To Joliet's complaint at the loss of the canoes, Father Marquette replied: "Louis, Louis, long ago in this new land I learnt that one must not hope that he can avoid crosses, and the best means of living here contentedly is not to fear any of them and to expect from God's Goodness, while enjoying the smaller crosses, to have much heavier ones."

Seeing his companion's dejection, Marquette went on: "Good Father Druillettes told me when I was a very young missionary with him at Three Rivers,

something that I have never forgotten. 'Remember,' he said, 'that it is Christ and His Cross that we must seek and if we aim at anything else, we'll get nothing but affliction for body and soul.'

"Louis, you are too eager to seek the things that may please Caesar on this voyage, and I believe that I am wiser in seeking only those that are God's."

"But the loss of the canoes! I must report to Monsieur, the Governor, at Quebec!"

"Suppose they are gone. We have trees already felled." The Blackrobe pointed whimsically to the fallen timber that was everywhere. "And we have hatchets and strong right arms."

With the ending of the storm the flood stage of the river subsided rapidly, and by the middle of the afternoon the woodsmen were able to search the lower end of the island for traces of the lost canoes.

No success attended the search.

To his companion's despondent report, Marquette replied: "I have prayed Mary Immaculate to continue her protection of the voyage and she never yet has failed me. Why should we lose confidence in her now when we need her aid most?"

As if in answer to his trust, Crow Dog came running up with the lost No Flesh at his heels. The brown hound hurled himself delightedly into the Blackrobe's arms.

The small slave explained: "When I threw No Flesh into the current last night to soften the river demon's anger, I thought he was a dead hound. And my heart in here was sad, for I like No Flesh as you do, Blackrobe Master. I went with Jean and Charles. I saw some berries and I left the woods-

men. Then I heard a barking. I tried to get to the barking. But the trees and wreckage left no trail open. I pushed off a bit of driftwood and swam with it till I was close to the lower end of this island. I swam in and there was No Flesh, barking and jumping around. Near him, wedged in the branches of a tree, was the Blackrobe's canoe. I have been all over it. It is not badly damaged."

"Thanks be to Mary Immaculate!" exclaimed Marquette and his eyes shone with triumph as he turned to Joliet.

An immediate start was made to recover the lost canoe. Following the slave boy's example, the woodsmen threw together a raft and poled themselves down the inshore side of the island.

While they were gone, the Blackrobe tended the fires that were drying out the expedition's supplies. Crow Dog squatted by the welcome warmth and ate greedily from the boiling pot.

When Father Marquette had finished reading his Office, he sat beside his slave boy.

"Crow Doggie," he began, "your finding of the canoe has reminded me of an experience I had three years ago at Chequamegon Bay."

"Blackrobe Master will tell me?"

Marquette threw a piece of buffalo steak to the begging hound and nodded.

"It was when I was stationed at the Mission of the Holy Spirit on the shores of the Lake of Copper. I had crossed the frozen bay to see a sick Ottawa, and night caught me returning over the ice. A fog closed down and I lost my bearings. I remember I wandered about till finally I did not know in what direc-

tion I was headed. Before me open water appeared and I knelt on the ice floe and prayed to the Squaw in Blue, whom you have heard me call Mary Immaculate."

"The Squaw in Blue's picture was on the gift you gave Stands First," Crow Dog informed his master.

"Yes; you are correct. It was on that medal. After I had prayed to her, there came over me the impulse to get up and go on in a certain direction. It was all black night about me. But I started to walk confidently in that direction.

"When dawn broke, rocks showed and I saw that I was off the treacherous ice floes. I was so tired that I lay down and slept. It was broad daylight when I woke, numbed to the bone. I looked back the way I had come in the darkness, and I saw that the ice floes had parted in the night and where I had walked was now open blue water. Then I recognized the narrow point I had landed on and I knew a small village of Hurons was not far away. When I walked there, the chief gave me a bag of acorns and some fene."

"Fene?" interrupted Crow Dog.

"You know it under another name. That is the nut of the beech tree pounded into flour and roasted."

"I know it. It is good to eat. The Sioux squaws make it. It is good to eat. I wish I had a pile of it as big as No Flesh right here now."

The two were disturbed by a sudden noise in a tall nearby cottonwood. Crow Dog pointed to a dog squirrel who had been watching them from the shelter of a gray branch.

"Master, do not move," cautioned the eager boy.

He flattened himself and crept to a bag of supplies. He got out his small bow and quiver.

The bow twanged and the big squirrel tumbled to the ground.

"Ugh! This is for the pot!" the boy shouted as he ran to pick up his prize. Crow Dog brought the limp body to the fire. The squirrel was quite dead, with an arrow through its side.

"I thought only Found in the Grass shot that way," complimented the Blackrobe.

"That Tuscarora boy shoots well too." And the small slave added the information: "Squirrels are the animals who plant all the trees. They gather the nuts before the snow falls and those they do not eat, they plant in the earth. I have heard a Sioux sorcerer, when I was the slave of Bear's Head, tell the boys. This sorcerer knew the language of the buzzards too."

When he saw Marquette smiling, Crow Dog nodded most earnestly. "He would listen to them talking in the trees and then he would come back to the fires and tell us what they said. But this sorcerer would never teach any of the other Sioux their language.

"I have listened to the buzzards. They speak words as you and the other whitemen do. I listen to you speaking in your strange language, but though I hear distinctly, I do not understand a word. So it is listening to the buzzards. That old Sioux sorcerer knew all their words and he would tell the captains what they said about the hunt and the weather. The buzzards know when the storm is coming and the days the Old Man Above will shine out overhead."

"But the sun is not a man," objected the Blackrobe.

"O yes, he is, Master. And the moon is his squaw. Snow is a man too, who comes in after nut time and goes away in the spring to the far north, beyond the Island That Comes and Goes in the Lake of Copper."

"What do you know about this Island That Comes and Goes?" questioned Marquette, amused at the boy's superstitions.

Promptly Crow Dog began: "I have heard the story when Red Calumet was my master. This is it. From the shore sometimes this island can be seen. Then it comes. Other days it is hidden in fogs. Then it goes. Once long, long ago four Sioux were paddling their canoes on the Lake of Copper. They came to this island and they were hungry. They put bits of rock they found on the shore into the fire till they were hot. Then they dropped them into the pot to make the water boil.

"When the Sioux were cooking their meat, they heard voices. These voices were saying, 'Who are the robbers who steal my children's cradles and playthings?' They paid no attention to the voices. That was a very foolish thing to do. They kept on eating their meat and soon after demons began to fight together in here."

Crow Dog rubbed his stomach most suggestively and rolled on the ground in pretended agony.

"Three of those Sioux died and only one lived. He crawled into his canoe and set it adrift. Some other Sioux saw the canoe and found him. He told

his story. The Island That Comes and Goes was shunned by all men after that."

"And I strongly suspect what happened. There was copper in those rocks the Indians used to heat their water."

"But, Blackrobe Master," Crow Dog persisted, "they heard the voices of the demons of the island saying, 'Who are the robbers who steal my children's ——' "

"They were liable to hear most anything when the copper poisoning began to take effect."

Here the two were interrupted by the return of Joliet and the woodsmen. They reported the recovery of the other canoe. Though both crafts were damaged, they were not beyond repair.

The next day was spent in mending the canoes and fighting the swarms of mosquitoes that the storm seemed to have brought to the island.

"I verily believe, Louis, that these little mosquitoes have caused more profanity among our woodsmen than there has ever been since the beginning of the world. I feel as if little sparks were continuously falling on my body." Marquette spoke ruefully to his companion as they stood on the bar of the island and watched the work of the woodsmen.

Under Jean's directions they had bound drift logs together and over this insecure flooring erected the two sails they carried as a protection against the small pests that now were everywhere.

The raft had been Marquette's idea and Joliet had added to it by erecting the two sails as a protection against the fierce rays of the July sun.

When the construction was finished, the repaired

canoes were secured either side of the raft and again the explorers poled off into the current. Gladly they left astern this island that had almost brought the party to an untimely end.

With everybody smoking, some protection was gained against the mosquito pest and the new raft plan was highly approved.

Crow Dog, especially, liked it for he could dive overboard and swim alongside, while No Flesh raced up and down, barking excitedly. At other long times the boy and the hound would squat and watch the lines astern. Whenever a catfish was hooked a war-whoop announced the fact to all.

Marquette and Joliet discussed the probable source of this river. Their instruments told them they were now below the latitude of the English settlement, called Virginia, so they felt sure the Great Water did not flow into the Atlantic Ocean. It still remained doubtful whether this River of the Conception emptied into the Vermilion Sea that washed the shores of the lands of California or into the Mexican Gulf.

Joliet concluded: "And so, my Father, I agree with you. We must go on till we settle this all-important point. The next Indians we meet, if they do not slay us, should be able to give definite information about the mouth of this seemingly endless river."

The river below them was in some places almost a league in width. High brown bluffs would appear on either side, and when the current swept the raft almost under the shadow of the dense canebrake, they would occasionally see a grave bear watching them.

No Flesh would bark his defiance, while the bear sat up motionless and followed the raft with his head till it swept out of sight around another bend.

Sometimes the river would box the compass. Now flowing to the south, then swinging to the east and into a sharp bend that would carry them for a league or more due north. Then would come the inevitable bend, a reach to the west, and the Great Water would straighten out on its southern course again.

For three days they sailed downward on their raft. Never once, during the daytime, did the watch sight a trace of an Indian. By nights they floated along smoking, when awake, to discourage the mosquitoes that found their way out on the wide tide. An occasional drift log would bump and slip by, white and still. Then ahead out of the dark the darker timber of an island would loom. It would stand out as they slid down one shore, big and black and solid, like a dimly remembered castle on some far distant European stream.

The raft proved the best protection the party had yet devised and so they did not land, except to gather berries, or wood for the fires.

On one of these evenings when the raft lay moored under a cutbank, Crow Dog came running to the Blackrobe with a small dead bird in his hand.

"I saw it on a bush, Master, and I shot my arrow. See, it is a new kind of bird."

Marquette examined the soft little thing. It was a parraqueet. Its tiny head was partly red and partly yellow. Its neck was yellow and the body a bright green.

The Blackrobe took the dead bird and, going to one of his bags, lifted out the plumed calumet.

"See, Crow Dog, this bird is of the same species as these the Peorias used to decorate the stem of our peace pipe."

"It is a good omen, then," said the slave boy earnestly, "I will make an amulet out of it and it will carry me safely back to Red Calumet far away in the north."

Marquette looked kindly on his small slave.

"I will give you a better amulet." He searched through one of the bags that held gifts, till he found what he wanted. "Crow Doggie, you have heard me speak about the Manitou Who came down and died for all of us. Here is a picture on this medal of His Mother. She is the Squaw in Blue, who has a tender pity in her heart for all small slave boys. So put this medal of God's Mother in your amulet. I assure you you will have greater protection than any parraqueet's feathers can give you."

"Master says wise words. I will do as Master says. I like the Squaw in Blue."

The boy danced aft to his lines.

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CHAPTER XI

AT MITCHIGAMEA

THE expedition had come into the late afternoon of July 8th. The raft was abreast of the end of a league-long island. Joliet had been scanning the main shore as it was revealed across the sandy bar. He lowered his glasses and handing them to Father Marquette remarked: "My Father, pardon my interrupting the reading of your Office, but look and tell me what you make out there below those giant cottonwoods on the western bank."

The Blackrobe swept the landscape downstream. At first his vision took in the green, thickly-wooded bank—dense canebrake, elms and bass and towering cottonwoods. Then, as he turned the glasses further down the Great Water, suddenly a large village moved into his view. He was looking on the reed-thatched roofs of many cabins—an hundred and fifty—two hundred easily.

There were squaws going and coming between the cabins and the bank. Red-skinned children ran about, and smoke rose from the vents in the roofs of the cabins.

"This is the largest village we have ever seen on this river, Louis. It is clear that they have not sighted us yet."

Marquette laid aside the glasses and knelt on the

rudely-lashed-together raft. Again he prayed Mary Immaculate's protection.

Joliet interrupted: "Of a truth, good Father, I do not like the reports we have gathered of these downstream savages. Have you forgotten what we stumbled on, back there many leagues, where the buzzards gathered?"

"Louis, Louis, your name should have been Thomas, the way you doubt! Ever since we paddled from Mackinac beach we have listened to wild reports and rumors of the fierce savages downstream—demons of the air and water, very Iroquois, who would eat us all—and what have we met but friendly, benighted souls."

Marquette put his hand on the other's shoulder and continued most earnestly, "Ah! Louis mine, every league I descend this River of the Conception I am learning these river tribes are but lost sheep of Our Master. They must needs be sought out, since for the most part they cry out so loudly to a Blackrobe's ears that he is forced to risk all gladly to rescue them from the jaws of the wolf, Satan.

"A new village of these other sheep lies below us. Suppose there is danger! I look on it as a fair opportunity to show angels and men that I love my Creator more than the life which I hold at His Hands. Would you have me let it slip by?"

"Of a truth, good Father, you seek the things that are God's. But I must remember I seek the things that are Caesar's, and I wish to report to Monsieur, the Governor."

"You will have a whole skin when again you climb the rock of Quebec. Never fear, my friend," prom-

ised the Blackrobe. "Take all necessary precautions, of course. But, remember, we always rely on higher aid than shot and powder horn."

While the two leaders were speaking in French, Crow Dog had come up. Silently he begged for the glasses and kept looking at the distant village. Now he returned the glasses to Joliet and watched him walk forward. Then the slave boy confided to Marquette: "Blackrobe Master, Makes Far Away Come Near told my eyes there is a black bear cub tied before one of the cabins and the children are teasing it. A man with one arm came out of the cabin and drove the children away."

Further discoveries were interrupted by Joliet's shouted orders: "Move all supply bags back to the canoes. We will abandon the raft and paddle by this village that is opening up before us."

The canoes were hardly separated from the raft when it was clear that the expedition had been sighted at the village.

Joliet held his glasses before his eyes as he called triumphantly across the intervening waters to Marquette: "My Father, the shore is humming like an angry beehive. Braves are running to the water's edge and launching great war canoes. I count four —five—and one of these giant canoes has thirty warriors, at least, on board!"

Soon all were able to make out the five great canoes, filled with feathered and beaded savages, putting out from the shore to cut the passage off.

Marquette directed: "Steer to the village bank. If they see we aim to land, it will help them to know we come on a peaceful mission only."

Joliet supplemented the order to the woodsmen: "Have your muskets loaded, but do not fire till I give the signal. We may have to fight a running battle with these natives of the lower river."

Now shouts and war cries carried clearly across the waters. A cottonwood canoe, easily fifty feet in length, was coming swiftly up the inshore eddy. The cries of its warriors made Crow Dog crouch lower in the canoe and hug No Flesh for comfort. A pair of other equally large long canoes were standing far out in the middle of the wide river, while the remaining two had steered downstream to cut off escape if the expedition should get by the upstream warriors.

Marquette, when the inshore canoe was sixty yards off, knelt up and raised the plumed calumet. He prayed quietly as he held aloft the Indian emblem of peace. "Mary Immaculate, Mother of God and Mother of all grace, remember us."

Joliet's canoe was close astern of Marquette's. The woodsmen had ceased to paddle and each had his hand on his concealed weapon awaiting anxiously for the signal to begin firing.

Marquette heard Jean mutter: "Several well directed shots in the sides of that great war canoe and those screeching demons would have something else to think about!"

The long canoe turned when it breasted the tiny crafts of the whitemen's party and, keeping thirty yards off, paddled downstream.

Marquette, kneeling so that all could clearly see him, kept holding aloft the calumet.

The din from the landing ahead, where several

hundred warriors were advancing and retreating at the water's edge, was now deafening.

There was a group of older men, standing well up the shore, and gravely watching the approaching canoes. They took no part in the leaping dances. Rightly the Blackrobe judged these were the captains of the village.

He directed the canoes to be headed to land on the sandy beach below this group. Again he held aloft the calumet and, lowering it, placed the stem to his lips and pretended to smoke and blow the fumes to the four points of the compass.

The great canoe inshore now dropped astern and was rapidly paddled to come up on the far side of the whitemen and force them into the bank. It swept closer and Peter shouted a warning: "See! That ugly tattooed demon in the bow is going to hurl his warclub. Look out, my Father!"

Hardly had the woodsman's warning been uttered when one of the warriors hurled his studded warclub. The cruel weapon passed close over the Blackrobe's head and fell with a splash beyond.

Quickly Marquette ordered: "No firing!" and very reluctantly Jean and René released their grasp on their weapons.

The canoes were almost abreast of the village shore by this time and about a score of the warriors rushed into the water and began to swim towards them. Still confident in Our Lady's protection, Marquette invoked her again. "Mary Immaculate, remember us!"

This time he stood up in the cranky canoe and, balancing himself by placing one hand on the head

of the cowering Crow Dog, raised aloft the plumed calumet for the last time. He extended it towards the group of older men, who remained standing apart from the shrieking, dancing savages.

Marquette took in the scene: the swimming warriors almost ready to clutch the bark sides of his canoe; the screaming squaws and children before the reed-thatched sides of the cabins; the leaping warriors at the water's edge, some brandishing their clubs and tomahawks, some already fitting arrows to their bows.

Joliet called quietly to Marquette: "They mean war. The calumet has failed us. We must shoot our way out."

The Blackrobe shook his head. "We still have Mary Immaculate's protection. She can move the most savage hearts." And once more he held aloft the Calumet of the Sun.

It seemed as though the older men in the group on the shore recognized for the first time the calumet. Orders in a strange tongue were shouted, and the hostile gestures of the warriors changed as suddenly as a bird swoops. The great war canoe, filled with the vermilion-stained men, shot alongside and its captain directed Marquette in sign language to turn his canoe inshore.

Obediently the Blackrobe gave the order to Jean and Peter. When the first canoe was within twenty feet of the bank, in the midst of the swimming and wading savages, the Blackrobe saw two of the older men come running into the water. Each carried a bow and quiver. These weapons they cast into Marquette's canoe.

Joliet called: "That is the most peaceful sign we have yet seen!"

One of the older men, painted yellow, and vermilion striped, by signs invited Marquette's party to disembark. The other said something in a tongue strange to Marquette's ears. He thought he detected some Huron words in the old man's speech and so addressed him in Huron. Again the old man by signs indicated that Marquette and his party should come ashore.

The canoe was in shallow water and Crow Dog leapt overboard and held the bows. Leaving a woodsman in each canoe, the rest of the party followed the two old men towards the group of captains. Marquette walked first, holding aloft the plumed calumet.

By gestures he saluted the chiefs. One replied in a strange language and directed Marquette to follow him towards one of the cabins. The village—warriors, squaws and children—surrounded the party. All the time the Indians were talking loudly and pointing at the whitemen and admiring the "thunder-sticks" that Joliet and the red-sashed woodsmen carried.

Seated in the cabin on a reed mat, Marquette spoke in the six Indian tongues that he knew. Finally, he returned to Illinois. Here one of the captains spoke to a young warrior and he came back with a very old man. Again the Blackrobe spoke and the old man replied in Illinois. Using him as an interpreter, Marquette made presents of a string of black and white striped glass beads, several round bucklers, and a large clasp knife with a horn handle.

Then he told the captain the purpose of his party was not warlike, but peaceful. They were sailing down the Great Water, seeking the sea. He asked if the chiefs could give him and his companions any information.

When the old man had interpreted this, he listened silently to the captain's reply. Then he said to Marquette: "This village is called Mitchigamea. These people are Mitchigameas. This captain is Waving Grass. He says at first they did not recognize the calumet. They always respect it. He says four bends of the Great Water below there is a larger village of the Downstream People. It is called Akamsea. There you will get answers to your questions, for the Downstream People trade with the lower river and we do not. Waving Grass says your presents are very good. He wishes the whitemen to eat with him and sleep this night in his cabins. Tomorrow he will send a canoe that will lead you to Akamsea. Waving Grass wishes this."

The Blackrobe retranslated the captain's words to Joliet. His companion objected: "My Father, I do not trust some of the warriors and sorcerers. I have been watching and reading their faces. They covet our muskets and our scalps. It is not prudent to spend the night in this village."

But Father Marquette reassured him. "We have protection on high. And, besides, they have received us under the calumet. I trust them. Let us accept Waving Grass' invitation."

Then squaws brought in earthenware dishes of sagamite, fried fish, grapes and plums.

When they had eaten, Marquette, through the old

man, tried to tell Waving Grass and his captains that he was a Blackrobe and he came to the Great Water to bring the people who lived on its banks news of the Manitou Who made all things.

The old man repeated Marquette's message, but Joliet whispered: "It is easy to see, my Father, that our aged interpreter does not know what he is saying. I am wondering just what message he is telling Waving Grass and his people."

"Even though he does know little, it is a small seed that cast into the ground will bear much fruit in its own good time. We shall go back; I, to my dear Illinois, and you to Quebec. After us will come other Blackrobes, and then my message will be understood."

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CHAPTER XII

THE RANSOM OF BUFFALO TAIL

THAT evening, when Marquette and Joliet were resting in the cabin Waving Grass had assigned them, the old man who had interpreted for the party came up. Instead of addressing the Blackrobe directly, he stood before No Flesh and, speaking in Illinois, said: "Tell me something, Manitou's dog. You follow him everywhere. Your Master has told you—do not conceal the matter from me, for I dare not ask your Master about the matter."

The Blackrobe listened and then very gravely he called No Flesh and talking into his ear, replied: "Blackrobe's dog, listen to your Master. Tell this old man to speak to me. He may. I am not a Manitou, but a man as he is."

At this the intrepreter looked relieved and spoke directly. "Man-like-Manitou. This is what is troubling me. At the council, you had me tell Waving Grass about your Manitou, Who made heaven and earth. But the sorcerers say your moccasins have no bottom."

" 'My moccasins have no bottom!' Indeed, that is almost true." Marquette ruefully surveyed his worn pair.

"The sorcerers of this village mean you speak with a split tongue."

"That I do not."

The old man persisted: "They say we should worship the Great Manitou of the buffaloes."

The Blackrobe questioned the old man further and learnt his difficulty. Marquette asked: "You admit each buffalo is not a Manitou, but the Buffalo Manitou you worship lives under the earth and animates each buffalo?"

"Nothing is more certain."

"Then have the bears, wolves, deer —all animals their Manitous?"

"All animals have their Great Manitou under the earth," replied the old man.

"Then if you believe that, you should believe man has his great Manitou."

"Nothing is more certain."

"That is sufficient to convince you that your sorcerers are not reasonable. If man who is on the earth is master of all animals—and you see he is, for he hunts and kills and eats them—it is reasonable to believe that man's Manitou is master of all the animal Manitous. Where, then, is your sorcerers' intelligence if they do not teach you to invoke Him Who is Master of all others?"

The old man did not answer directly, but he thought for several minutes and then he said to No Flesh: "Man-like-Manitou's dog, your Master has told me right. It is the sorcerers' whose moccasins have no bottom. I go to tell in the cabins your Master's words."

At sunrise the next morning the old man interpreter again stood at Marquette's cabin.

"Man-like-Manitou," he said, "a Mitchigamea is

about to ransom himself. Waving Grass invites you and your brothers to come and see it."

Marquette and Joliet accepted, and followed the interpreter to the edge of a prairie, north of the village.

When Waving Grass saw the whitemen approaching, he sent two elders who escorted them to reed mats near the Captain's seat.

Hundreds of vermilion-painted Mitchigameas were ranged about this spot.

"What is the meaning of this ceremony?" demanded the Blackrobe.

The interpreter, who had seated himself alongside the whitemen, replied: "Man-like-Manitou, last autumn there was a quarrel between Spies the Enemy's son and the warrior, Buffalo Tail. The warrior drew his knife and killed Spies the Enemy's son. Buffalo Tail hunted all winter and spring, but the Manitous did not send the bears to his traps and the buffaloes kept to the prairies towards the setting sun. Buffalo Tail has not the skins and robes, so he has come back.

"It is the law of our nation," the old man concluded gravely. "He should not have quarreled."

From the edge of the village came the monotonous thump, thump, thump of the drum. Soon was heard the mournful voice of an Indian, chanting his Death Song. All the talk and laughter ceased among the assembled Mitchigameas. Then Buffalo Tail came into sight. His face was freshly painted with vermilion, and vermilion stripes were around his body and limbs. He walked slowly, drumming and chant-

ing. Behind him in single file came his squaw and three young children.

The Mitchigameas opened a passage and the sad little procession marched through. Coming straight on, Buffalo Tail headed for the spot where Spies the Enemy and his sons stood in rigid silence.

When Buffalo Tail was four paces from Spies the Enemy, he stooped and disengaged the thong that held the drum in place. Slave squaws placed mats for the squaw and children. Buffalo Tail looked to see that his family were seated. Then he stepped a pace nearer to Spies the Enemy.

The old man rapidly translated Buffalo Tail's words into Illinois: "Your son provoked me, calling me a coyote and an old squaw. In an angry moment I stabbed him and he fell at my moccasins. I fled to the marshes at the head of this river." Buffalo Tail indicated with a sweeping gesture the northern portion of the small river that flowed placidly by a hundred yards away. "I hoped that the Manitous would put animals in my traps, so that I could have skins and robes to pay you for your lost son. The Manitous were angry. They did not put animals in my traps. All winter and spring I hunted. The Manitous were still angry. I am a Mitchigamea. I know the Mitchigameas' law."

Buffalo Tail reached into his apron and withdrew a knife.

"Here is the knife with which I killed your son. By it I wish to pay my ransom."

Buffalo Tail advanced and gave the knife to the silent Spies the Enemy. The Mitchigamea accepted it without a word.

Buffalo Tail stood erect, his hands hanging at his hips.

Spies the Enemy turned to the youngest of his sons and extending the knife, ordered, "Kill him." At this command Buffalo Tail straightened. The young brave walked forward. He placed his left hand on the bare shoulder of the victim. After making two feints with the knife, he plunged it to the hilt into Buffalo Tail's breast. Almost immediately the young brave withdrew the blade and stepped back to his place behind his father.

Buffalo Tail still stood erect, his eyes on Spies the Enemy. There was not a sound from his family or the watching Mitchigameas. Only a crow called in the woods. At every pulsation of the victim's heart, the ruddy stream stained the vermilion streaks on his body.

Then Buffalo Tail's knees began to quake. He made an effort to steady himself. He kept looking into the eyes of Spies the Enemy. For one beat—two beats—he succeeded. The color was ebbing out of his countenance. Then as a tired warrior might sink to his mat, Buffalo Tail sagged. One knee touched the prairie grass and he fell on his side. There was a convulsive tremor throughout the body. The tremor ceased.

Only then did his squaw and children rush forward with cries that sharply broke the stillness, to throw themselves on the body. A murmur of sympathy ran like a prairie fire along the circles of Mitchigamean squaws.

The old man who sat at Marquette's side said:

"This Buffalo Tail, he broke the law. He has paid his ransom to the law. He was a brave man."

"If I had only known," cried the Blackrobe, "what this diabolical ceremony was, I would have ransomed him myself."

"It takes many skins and robes to pay for a captain's son. Buffalo Tail should not have quarreled to the death with a captain's son. He knew our law," observed the interpreter. "Spies the Enemy was merciful. He allowed Buffalo Tail all winter and spring to catch the ransom. If he had not come in person, the captain's sons would have hunted him and his family like wolves and cut them down where they found them. It was better this way."

All this while Spies the Enemy and his sons stood motionless, watching the grief of the squaw and children. When five minutes had passed, Spies the Enemy walked towards the weeping group and spoke.

The old man interpreted his words to Father Marquette. "Squaw—two boys—girl—stop weeping. Buffalo Tail was a brave. Like a warrior he was not afraid to die as the law of the Mitchigameas demands. I like bravery. So I adopt you—squaw—two boys—girl—in the place of my dead son. Our fires are your fires. Live in my cabin or my son's cabins. We will treat you like our own sons and daughters. You shall have the protection of Spies the Enemy and his family."

When the Mitchigamean captain finished, the circles of Indians shouted: "That is right! That is right! That is right!"

Squaws came forward and led the four towards

the cabins of the village. After them followed the Mitchigameas.

Father Marquette had been standing, pity in his eyes, and he turned sadly to Joliet and said: "We have witnessed this morning the sheer brutality of paganism and, closely associated with it, fortitude and charity. What Christians these Mitchigameas will make when God's grace touches their hearts and they listen to the Prayer!"

The Blackrobe had forgotten his companions and he spoke aloud, "Ah, Mary Immaculate, beg your Son that He give me the power to reach the hearts of these river children as the knife of Spies the Enemy reached the heart of this poor Mitchigamean father." And, as his custom was, he walked apart, lost in prayer.

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CHAPTER XIII

THE GREAT BLUE WATER

WHEN the time of departure came, Waving Grass sent a long canoe, commanded by a son of Spies the Enemy, to show Marquette the way to the Downstream People. The voyagers entered a wide reach of the great Water. Towards its lower end, when they were paddling almost due south, Spies the Enemy's son signaled the whitemen to enter a narrow cutoff walled with solid timber. Without a word, the Mitchigamean long canoe turned and started upstream.

Once by the gray driftwood piled high at the head of the narrow channel, the expedition shot along. Moss like gray beards hung from the overhanging trees. Feathered palms and dense canebrake were plentiful. The shade in the twisting and squirming cutoff after the hot open river was most welcome. Crow Dog's keen sight made out a snake swimming with head erect across the current. He shouted it was a poison snake.

The canoes came near the lower end of the cutoff, and the main channel of the Great Water showed ahead.

Here, moored below a palm-shaded bank, was a long canoe with the figure of a green serpent painted on the bows. As soon as the whitemen were sighted, the captain who commanded this canoe stood upright.

He was a tall warrior and, like his rowers, copper skinned. These new Indians had their noses pierced, and from them and from their ears hung yellow beads. Vermilion and yellow stripes bound their arms and legs. They wore belts of bright-hued parrakeet wings.

Marquette recognized these as the Akamsea, or Downstream People, he had been told would meet him.

The Akamsea captain had his paddlers range his canoe alongside. He held up a long calumet. The stem of this pipe was decked out with bright yellow and green plumage. Taking fire from one of his crew and lighting the tobacco in the polished bowl, he solemnly inhaled and blew smoke three times towards the whitemen. All the while, in a deep voice the captain sang. The language was unknown to the Blackrobe.

Then the Akamsea captain climbed into the drifting canoe of Marquette. Holding out the smoking calumet and still singing very agreeably, he offered the peace pipe to the Blackrobe.

He made signs to his men, and a hugh watermelon on a wooden platter was passed to him. He invited Marquette and Joliet to eat. They did, and at the captain's direction, passed the platter to the woodsmen.

When this ceremony was over, the captain stepped back into his own canoe and, motioning the two smaller canoes to follow close behind, he led the way out of the cutoff.

"This reception is slightly different from the last two," called Joliet across the water.

"No matter what the reception, we are safe," Marquette assured him.

When they were once more on the wide yellow river, they saw on the left bank, opposite the mouth of a small river that emptied its gentle current into the swift flowing Great Water and below a fringe of tall cottonwoods and palmettos, many large brown cabins. These were long and wide. At the water's edge lines of copper-skinned Akamseas awaited the coming of the whitemen.

As the fleet approached the eastern shore, all the Downstream People began singing the same song that the captain had sung. The voices carried out over the water and the singing increased in volume as Marquette and Joliet, at the head of their woodsmen, stepped from their canoes and, following their escort, walked through lines of Indians. Copper-skinned children were everywhere. The warriors wore yellow beads in their noses and ears. They carried bows and cougar-tail quivers of arrows, with studded warclubs slung over their bare shoulders. The Akamsea squaws in wretched skins had few ornaments. Their hair in two braids was thrown behind their ears.

Joliet observed: "You notice, my Father, there is not a musket visible. But those glass beads the warriors wear betoken some commerce with the Spanish."

Marquette was remarking the palmettos and palms that afforded ample shade in this, the most picturesque village the expedition had yet entered. The cabins were of a new design. They were made of

bark and were longer and wider than any of the cabins upstream.

The guests had now advanced into this palm-lined village and in the center they were stopped before the Great Captain's cabin. A scaffolding had been erected and covered with bark. Here in the hot shade Marquette and Joliet were seated on a black bear skin; the others, on willow branches. Across from them the Great Captain of the Akamsea, gorgeous in his bright feathers, sat on a mat of canes, adorned with animal and reptile figures. Behind him the elders were arranged and in endless circles beyond squatted the bead-hung warriors and all the squaws and children. No Flesh sat up alertly at Marquette's feet and surveyed the council.

When all were seated, the Blackrobe laid four gifts of black and white glass beads and some iron knives before the Great Captain. He spoke in Illinois, asking if any Akamsea understood him.

When he paused and looked around, a young warrior pushed forward. He replied in fluent Illinois, saying that he was More Toes and he had been taken captive and had lived for several winters in the Illinois cabins before he was recaptured by a war party of his own tribe.

Through this new interpreter the Blackrobe presented his gifts to the Great Captain and told the Akamseas the purpose of his voyage to their village. Then in answer to Marquette's questions More Toes relayed the Great Captain's words.

"Feigns To Sleep," the interpreter explained, "says to tell his white brothers who come to visit him from the north that the Great Blue Water is less

than ten days paddling from this village. But the Akamseas do not paddle often to the Great Blue Water. Their blood enemies, the Natchez, live downstream. These poison the springs and many Akamseas die. If you go further down the Great Water you will surely meet these nations that never show mercy to strangers, but break their heads without any cause."

In answer to a further question, More Toes translated: "Yes; these Natchez barter for thundersticks with men whose skin is the same color as yours. These whitemen live in a great village below the Natchez lands. These whitemen split trees with long knives and build great cabins that float on the water. The men with thundersticks whom you met upstream are the allies of our enemies. They bar the river and prevent us from exchanging our fruits and buffalo skins."

Marquette gave this information to Joliet and again the Blackrobe asked through More Toes about the sea.

Feigns To Sleep assured the white man he himself had paddled to the sea, where the water is not brown like the Great Water, but bluer than the sky overhead.

When Joliet understood this, he exclaimed: "Then, indeed, good Father Marquette, this Akamsea captain has settled our last doubt! He has been to the mouth of this everlasting river! His Great Blue Water can be no other body of water than the gulf the Spanish call Mexican. Now we know our River of the Conception empties into this gulf."

Great wooden platters were offered to the guests.

These held delicious roasted ears of corn, seasoned with dried peaches, and large pieces of dog's flesh. At the close of the feast, watermelons larger than any the party had ever seen, were brought in. With these were dried peaches and papaw.

What food the guests and elders left was passed back to the warriors and outer circles of squaws and children.

Crow Dog was eating so much watermelon the Blackrobe noticed it. He whispered to his slave boy: "Tonight, the demon in the watermelon, as you would say, is liable to bite you."

Crow Dog laughed. "Blackrobe Master, watermelon is very good food. We do not have it in the north, so Crow Dog eats it when he can. Ugh! Crow Dog hopes you stay in this village many days."

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CHAPTER XIV

SHADOW OF THE SUN

WITH the coming of black night, Marquette and his companions were escorted to sleeping cabins, roofed with cane. These were constructed on platforms elevated to the height of a man. A cane-brake ladder gave entrance to each. Below the platform fires of green wood were smoldering. The ascending smoke, penetrating through the floor, kept the mosquitoes and maddening gnats away and made some sleep possible.

When Marquette and Joliet were seated on the rush mats, they held a secret consultation.

"And so, my Father," concluded Joliet, "while you were speaking through that young man interpreter, I was studying the faces of the braves and sorcerers, who crowded before this Feigns To Sleep's cabin. And I must say, though I speak not a word of their language, I read on many of their countenances the strong desire to have our scalps and possessions. Particularly, I watched that chief sorcerer who wears the necklace of bears' teeth. He plots evil against us."

"The sorcerers," Marquette agreed, "may plot evil against our little party. But, Louis mine, I do not think this Akamsea chief will permit a violation of the calumet. All these Indians along the River of the Conception, as we have found, consider

that plumed calumet sacred, and if these Akamseas minded to kill us they would have done so at the water's edge this afternoon when we landed.

"You recall how Feigns To Sleep insisted the Natchez downstream did not honor the calumet. Thereby, he implied that his people did. Let us post a sentry and then turn in, confident in that constant protection of our Patroness we have experienced, and will experience, till our canoes ground on the beach at Mackinac."

It had grown quiet in the darkened village. The only lights showing were the soft glows from the smudges that burnt under the raised sleeping cabins. Now and then a village cur sat up on his haunches and howled. From the distant prairie beyond the village of the Akamseas there came the ceaseless chirp of insects, and, occasionally, the long howl of a wolf, the staccato cry that was a coyote's, the screech of a surprised night bird, and, at times, the distant muffled bellowings of innumerable buffaloes.

At the close of his first watch, Joliet touched the sleeping Blackrobe. Instantly Marquette sat up. When his fellow explorer was breathing deeply, the Blackrobe changed his position to sit where he could watch the silent village. In the next cabin No Flesh rose from the side of Crow Dog and, bending himself into a half bow, yawned. Then the hound came clawing up the ladder and lay down at his master's side. His tail thumped the flooring as Marquette petted him. No Flesh sighed contentedly and was asleep again.

Looking over the shadowy collection of cabins, great love for these painted, neglected children of

God filled the Blackrobe's breast. He raised his hand and blessed the Akamseas and the desire came, strong as a command, to pray that he might make at least one conquest for Christ here before he departed from these friendly new people.

The Blackrobe had had this desire before and it had been gratified. He looked down on the faithful No Flesh, at his side, and he remembered the night in the canoe on the other river when he had petitioned that Mary Immaculate would direct him to some favorite soul. Next day he had stumbled on the Illinois party that was burnt by the exploding powder keg. He remembered the hound's master—Long Fox was his name, wasn't it?—who had seemed to be but waiting in confidence for the Saving Waters before departing this life.

So Father Marquette put his thought into familiar words, "O Mary Immaculate! There is little hope of convincing the adults of this village, but there must be somewhere among these poor Akamseas a little papoose about to die. Through thy Son's mercy obtain that I pour the Saving Waters on his forehead ere he departs, and thus these people will have a powerful intercessor before the Throne."

Marquette repeated the words of his favorite petition, "*O Maria. Mater Dei. Mater gratiæ. Memento mei.*"

On watch there alone, the missionary prayed many minutes for these souls to whom he burnt to explain the Prayer. Fatherly he blessed them once more; his hand rising and falling. In his benediction he included these who slept under the still palms nearby and those other sheep—the unknown Natchez—whose

villages were further down the wide black tide of the Great River.

Pity rose in his heart as he pictured again the emblems of a slavish paganism that stood before each nearby cabin. He remembered the idol in the middle of an Akamsea cabin he had entered that afternoon —the bear's head with eyes and snout painted green, below it, the black glossy pelt drooped about the raised pole—the squaws invoking this—the little black-eyed children standing reverently in the cabin shadows. He recalled the freshly killed soft white wooly puppy that hung on the end of a smaller pole, a sacrifice to this bear manitou. And that other glimpse within the sorcerer's cabin of the serpent idol that was the Great Captain's, surrounded by the painted snake skins and the hideous dance masks and the grim bleached grinning skulls.

Then into the watching Blackrobe's mind came the picture of the sorcerers of this tribe, standing scowlingly about when the young man who spoke Illinois was translating his words at the council about the Manitou, Who made heaven and earth—bears and serpents—all men. . . .

When it was the end of the Blackrobe's watch, he woke Jean in the next cabin. Marquette took off his frayed robe and, rolling it into a little bundle, placed it beneath his head. Consigning himself to the care of the Guarding Angels of these Akamseas and, especially, to the Queen of the Angels, he fell confidently asleep.

Sleepily he felt No Flesh curl up at his feet and,

later, he dimly heard Jean at the end of his watch have difficulties awakening the woodsman, Peter. . . .

Marquette shot up from the depths of dreamless slumber to feel soft fingers passing over his breast. He stirred, and instantly a pair of steel-like hands clutched his throat and a greasy palm was clapped over his mouth.

He tried to struggle and shout. It was in vain. A lithe, foul body clamped down on him. Something, that seemed like the claws of a bear trailed across his face. In his struggles he identified them as an amulet. He was choking. "Jesus." "Mary."

Then the Blackrobe was released. A dark figure leapt out of the entrance and down the ladder. Marquette knelt up to see a darker shadow running down the palm-shadowed village street. He turned to Joliet and found him deep in sleep. The Blackrobe made his way to the next cabin. The guard, Peter, sat with his head between his knees and he was snoring.

"Thank God, it was not murder that was in that visitor's heart, or we would all have gone to God ere this!"

Marquette shook the sleeping Peter and with an oath the woodsman sprang up and grasped his musket.

"What is it! My Father!" cried Peter. "What is it!"

"Quiet! The Sieur and I have had a visitor and if my suspicions are correct, it was one of the sorcerers."

Marquette went back to his mat and discovered that the crucifix, which had been under his head, was

missing. Also, some pictures of the French King and Queen that he had shown to the Akamseas last evening, were gone. Though he searched and even descended the ladder and looked around the smudge, he could find no trace of these articles. A sleeping village cur slunk away with a yelp when Marquette accidentally stepped on him.

Then Marquette realized that No Flesh had disappeared. He whistled, but no friendly hound came bounding. Returning to his cabin, the Blackrobe puzzled over his midnight visitor and, still puzzled, he stood the rest of the watch.

In the graying of the dawn, No Flesh came back. He scrambled up the ladder and threw himself on his master. A cruel thong wound around his jaws showed clearly why he had not barked a warning. The Blackrobe was attending his hound when the young man interpreter climbed up the ladder.

More Toes explained: "The sorcerer, Shadow of the Sun, sent me to say these words to the whiteman. When Shadow of the Sun went to his sleeping mat, he had a dream. This was his dream. Sun came to him and said: 'Go to the cabin of the whitemen. Take the medicine stick that the white sorcerer wears. Hang it at your side and walk the length of the village street three times before the day comes. Then you will be able to make greater medicine the next time the warriors go on the warpath against our blood enemies, the Natchez.'

"Shadow of the Sun came last night while you slept. He took the whiteman's dog before he could bark. He tied his jaws tight, but he did not hurt the dog, for his dream had not commanded that.

Shadow of the Sun took your medicine stick. He walked the length of the village street with it three times before the day came. And now he wishes to restore to the white sorcerer his medicine stick."

"Where is it?" asked Marquette.

"Shadow of the Sun has it in his cabin," More Toes began.

"Take me to him."

The interpreter objected, but the Blackrobe strode off alone towards the sorcerer's cabin. Before he reached the door, More Toes was at his side.

"Tell Shadow of the Sun the whiteman wants his medicine stick and his pictures."

The interpreter disappeared and shortly after Shadow of the Sun came forth. Marquette recognized the amulet of bears' claws and teeth that had trailed across his bosom when he had been awakened during the night.

Again the Blackrobe asked for the return of his property. More Toes translated the sorcerer's words. "Shadow of the Sun says he intended to bring them back, but you came to his cabin so early that he had not time."

"I will save him the trouble," dryly explained Marquette.

Shadow of the Sun re-entered his cabin and came out with the missing crucifix. He handed it to the Blackrobe.

"Where are the pictures of the Great White Captain and his squaw?"

Again the sorcerer disappeared within his cabin. When he returned he carried the pictures most respectfully.

"Never have I seen such real painting. These seem almost to be alive. Tell me this, white sorcerer. When the Great White Captain or his squaw dies, do these pictures close their eyes?"

"No," Marquette explained gravely. "The pictures still gaze at you."

"And the village of this Great White Captain, where is it?"

"His village is called Paris and it is many days paddling away—across the Great Blue Water."

"It must be very large and splendid?"

"Yes; it has as many subjects of the Great White Captain as there are leaves on the palms that you see about you."

The Blackrobe thought it opportune to impress the sorcerer. "In this White Captain's village there are some large cabins made of five cabins, one on top of another. They are almost as high as cottonwoods. The Great White Captain, when he goes through his village, rides in a cabin of leather that moves. It is drawn by six—eight animals."

Gravely Shadow of the Sun thanked the Blackrobe for his words, and said if he had known this he would never have offended the pictures by taking them.

He invited Marquette to have breakfast with him, and they sat on reed mats before the cabin and ate the sagamite and fruit the slave squaws brought. All through the meal the Blackrobe answered the sorcerer's questions and tried to explain to him the crucifix and its Figure.

Towards the close of the meal Marquette heard a squaw start the wailing notes of the Death Song. The sounds came from the cabin behind. At length,

the Blackrobe asked and learnt that the singer was Shadow of the Sun's squaw and her papoose was dying.

With a whispered prayer to Mary Immaculate, Marquette asked if he might see the papoose.

Shadow of the Sun rose and led the way into his cabin. The Blackrobe saw again the idols and skins and rows of skulls. But he passed on to one corner, where behind a skin partition a young squaw was seated. In her arms she held a papoose; it was almost dead.

Marquette stooped and attempted to make the Sign of the Cross over the papoose. The squaw withdrew her child.

More Toes explained: "This Pretty Bird Woman, she is afraid. She has heard you are a white sorcerer. Her papoose dies soon, anyway."

"Then I cannot hurt it, can I?"

"Nothing is more certain," replied the young man.

The Blackrobe looked around the cabin. Nearby stood an earthenware vessel of water. He took his handkerchief and dampened it.

Addressing Shadow of the Sun, he said: "Tell Pretty Bird Woman I will not hurt her child. Let me touch its forehead."

More Toes spoke in hurried words and Pretty Bird Woman, at an order from the sorcerer, reluctantly came closer to the whiteman. When the squaw held the gasping papoose up in her arms, Marquette bathed the tiny hot forehead, making the Sign of the Cross and repeating the formula of Baptism.

"Tell Pretty Bird Woman that I can do nothing

for her papoose's body. It is too late." At the Blackrobe's words, the young squaw sank down upon her mat and resumed the Death Song.

Great joy was in the heart of James Marquette as he walked from the cabin of Shadow of the Sun. His prayer of the night had been heard. He knew that very shortly these Akamseas would have a newly arrived intercessor before the Throne of the real Great Captain.

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CHAPTER XV

THE DANCE OF THE CALUMET

"BLACKROBE MASTER," said Crow Dog the morning of the third day Marquette and his party were among the Akamseas, "I have spoken with the squaw of the young brave who speaks Illinois. It is not good what she says."

"Keep your words till later, then," whispered the Blackrobe.

The two were now standing on the prairie back of the cabins and watching a crowd of Akamseas playing the moccasin game. On the ground were placed six beaded moccasins in two rows. Behind these crouched the intent Indians. The hider, whose turn it was, began to sing a doggerel verse that was unintelligible to Father Marquette, but it made the players laugh. While he sang, his hands were passing over and about and under the six moccasins. The others followed his every motion, eager to guess under which moccasin he would hide the little vermilion-daubed stone. Suddenly the singer stopped, and the players placed little piles of bets—beads, a stone knife, half a dozen bear's teeth—before the moccasin of their choice.

When all bets were laid, the hider picked up a stick and tipped over the winning moccasin, disclosing the little vermilion stone. He drew in to his side the losers' piles and paid, bead for bead, knife for

knife, teeth for teeth, to the lucky guessers. So the game went on endlessly.

As the Blackrobe and his slave boy walked away, Crow Dog informed his master: "This moccasin game—it is very old. It comes from the time when the animals talked as we do. I have heard that long ago the talking animals disputed about light and darkness. The day animals wanted more daylight—all the time daylight so that they could hunt more—and the night animals wanted always the darkness of night, for then they hunt best. Finally, the animals decided to meet in the twilight about a council fire and play the moccasin game. If the night animals won, the sun should never rise again. If the day animals guessed correctly, it should always be light for hunting. The game started. One time the animals with the sharpest eyes among the day animals guessed and won. Another time, the sharpest eyes among the night animals guessed under which moccasin the stone was hidden.

"Finally, all the player animals grew sleepy and the question was not yet settled. Then the coyote, who hunts by day and by night, suggested that there should be half the time daylight and half the time black light. All the players were so sleepy they agreed to settle the dispute that way.

"And that, Blackrobe Master, is why we have daylight and black night following each other ever since."

"That was the best way to settle the dispute," observed Marquette, smiling down on his slave boy. "I would men settled all their quarrels as wisely as your talking animals did."

Crow Dog broke in eagerly, "I know more about that day-night game. You know how the bear walks?" The boy imitated the clumsy shuffle accurately. "Well, when the game was over, all the animals ran away to their sleeping places. The bear had lent his moccasins for the game. He was so sleepy that he did not know what he was doing. He put the left moccasin on the right foot and the right moccasin on the left foot. That is why his feet are misshapen and now he must walk so." Again Crow Dog fell into the clumsy shuffle that any small bear might envy.

The two were alone and the Blackrobe remembered the boy's warning words. "What were the dreadful things More Toes' squaw told you?"

Crow Dog dropped his voice to a whisper. "She says she was in her cabin last night when that sorcerer, Shadow of the Sun, and five young braves came before the cabin and spoke together. It was not good what they said. They plan to come to your sleeping cabins when the moon goes away tonight and break all the whitemen's heads and take their bundles. Ugh! it is not good ——"

Marquette listened and smiled. "And how did Crow Dog learn all this?"

"More Toes' squaw, she thinks you are a Great Manitou and she is afraid of the thundersticks the other Captain and the woodsmen carry always."

"But they will not thunder and hurt her."

"No, Master, but they might hurt More Toes and she does not wish that to happen. She loves him very much."

The Blackrobe instructed Crow Dog to go through

the village and keep his eyes open. Then he sought Joliet and found him working with Jean and the other woodsmen, repairing the canoes.

Calling Joliet aside, Marquette related Crow Dog's words.

"My Father, I also have been watching the faces of the sorcerers and the young braves. There is evidently divided counsel in this palmy village. Some wish our goods and some are afraid of our muskets. I wish I knew which faction is the stronger."

Nothing more was learnt, but Crow Dog coming back reported that the Great Captain, Feigns To Sleep, was holding a council with the elders in his cabin.

That afternoon the interpreter appeared at Marquette's cabin.

"When the shadow of your roof falls on this stick," More Toes pointed to a small stake in the ground, "come to the dancing place. Feigns To Sleep wishes to dance the Captain's Dance in honor of the Blackrobe and his brothers."

Then the interpreter left, carrying with him a box of vermilion that the Blackrobe sent as a present to the young men.

Without Marquette's knowledge, Joliet cautioned the woodsmen to load their muskets and bring them along.

He told them: "If this is to be a surprise, it is better to take the part of the surprisers. You, René and Peter, stay by the canoes. See they are near the water's edge and have them ready to launch instantly if you hear any firing."

"Then, Sieur, we may have to blaze our way out?" Jean questioned.

"As we have all the muskets in the village, my bearded child," Joliet observed, "what is hard about that?"

"Unless they use poisoned arrows, Sieur," Jean replied to his fellows as the leader walked away. "What protection have we against their arrow heads! I wish I was five hundred leagues north! Our scalps were safe at Mackinac."

Here Charles put in: "Mackinac or this Akamsea village, I have confidence in our good Father's prayers. He is a saint and he has said repeatedly God's Mother is watching this expedition. She may not be watching us sinners, but she is protecting our Father."

Jean was not convinced. As he carefully cleaned his musket, he grumbled: "I wish I was sure she was protecting my scalp lock! I have seen more than one of these yellow-daubed savages gazing at it and I know he was thinking it would look just right, hanging in his cabin."

Promptly at the appointed time, five of the elders came to the whitemen's cabins to conduct them through the deserted village. To the east was a grove of tall cottonwoods. On the edge of this grove, where the gigantic shadows fell across the prairie the party found most of the Akamseas already assembled.

Marquette and his men were conducted to large skins on which were painted in crude colors—red and green and yellow—the figures of calumets, birds, and animals.

When they were seated, they noticed that on an-

other mat to the right was the Manitou of the Great Captain. This was the wooden figure of a large serpent, coiled and twisted and daubed green. Marquette had seen it before, when he was in Shadow of the Sun's cabin.

Before this image lay a gorgeous calumet, its stem plumed, and by it was a little heap of tobacco and a small fire from which the smoke rose up in a thin spiral. Back of this serpent figure were piled a mound of bows and arrows, warclubs and tomahawks.

While the whitemen were noting these things, the buffalo drums began their monotonous thumping. Five rows of young braves with wild-cat tails attached to their heels, and their whole body covered with yellow and green stripes, moved into the open space and began to sing and dance with slow movements. The singing was taken up by the rest of the village till the whole assembly was repeating the song. Marquette, though he recalled his six Indian languages, could not make out the words.

Then as the dance drew to its close, the dancers, singing in unison, approached the Manitou. The sorcerer, Shadow of the Sun, had lit the calumet and the leader of each row took the pipe, inhaled, and blew a cloud of smoke at the green wooden serpent. Throughout all this ceremony, his row danced, imitating exactly their leader's motions.

When the last of the dancers had honored the Manitou of the Great Captain, all retired into the seated ranks and Feigns To Sleep appeared alone. His body was yellow streaked and his headpiece was a bonnet of eagle feathers, dyed green. On his breast hung an amulet of enormous bears' claws.

The Great Captain of the Akamseas danced, singing the same words the chorus had used. Approaching the serpent image, he took the plumed calumet and, spreading the wings of the birds with which the long stem was decorated, the Great Captain faced the sinking sun and offered the calumet to it. Then turning directly towards the image, he put the mouth of the pipe to the lips of the serpent and invited it to smoke. After this ceremony he retired to his mat.

The space before the whitemen was cleared. Then came seven warriors and a boy, leading a yellow hound. These divided into two groups and, kneeling as though in canoes, pretended to paddle vigorously. All the rest of the audience sang the song that had been sung when Marquette landed at the village.

More Toes told the Blackrobe this was the Akamsea Welcome Song. The words were, "Today the sun shines upon us. You bring the brightest day this village has ever known. Our fathers and grandfathers never had such happiness!"

Looking towards Feigns To Sleep, Marquette saw he was surrounded by his elders and sorcerers. The paddlers approached and were welcomed with gifts and speeches. Then they were conducted to a place apart and by signs were urged to eat and later sleep.

Now the actors set one on guard and he put a stick beside him, but soon his head sank lower and lower between his knees. Then he was snoring. It was a rising snore with an explosion at the end of it.

When the woodsmen heard this, they burst out laughing and cried: "That is Jean's. That is the

way he snores. Nobody else along the length of the Great Water snores like that."

"I believe," suddenly cried Father Marquette, "these represent our party. There are the two leaders and the five woodsmen and Crow Dog with No Flesh."

While the seven pretended to sleep and the watcher snored, a new party of war-painted young men came up. They sat in council and in pantomine planned to creep up and with tomahawks break the heads of the sleepers and steal their bundles.

Here Feigns To Sleep strode into the council. He spoke swift words and by signs showed the young vermilion-streaked plotters that the serpent was angry, because the eight had smoked the calumet and they were protected while they slept.

The young braves came creeping towards the wooden serpent and they lay in the dust till Feigns To Sleep took the calumet and, having offered it to the lips of the serpent, went from one to the other and urged them to smoke and blow the smoke over the image.

When this was done, all left the open space but Feigns To Sleep. He beckoned More Toes to come forward and through his lips explained: "Blackrobe and companions, I have danced the Captain's Calumet before you to show you what wicked thoughts were in the minds of some of my young men, who have no sense. They wished to break your heads and cast your bodies in the Great Water and then divide your goods. But I learnt of it and I forbade them. You are under the protection of the calumet."

Then Feigns To Sleep filled the new calumet with

fresh tobacco and, lighting it with a glowing ember from the fire, came before the Blackrobe. Inhaling and blowing the smoke to the four winds, he offered the calumet to the Blackrobe, and after him, to all the whitemen.

That evening as soon as Marquette and Joliet were able to get away from Feigns To Sleep and his subjects, they talked over the situation.

"What is the use of going further?" questioned Joliet. "We are not able to withstand these warlike Natchez downstream. They have muskets, evidently, and we would be dead men. Even if we did succeed in escaping their weapons and descended this river, the chances are that the whitemen below——" he broke off suddenly to inquire, "You're convinced that they are Spanish, aren't you?"

"Yes, Louis; in a talk with Feigns To Sleep yesterday he told me these whitemen pray the same as we do, they use rosaries, and have bells calling to their Prayer Cabins. All these things More Toes described most accurately. There is no doubt the whitemen below us are Spaniards."

"Then, my Father, these Spanish would take us French prisoners. Long months would drag by before they send us to Spain and we are exchanged. So the fruits of our expedition would be lost and we might never see Quebec again."

"There is weight in your words, Louis mine," agreed Father Marquette, "and there is another and weightier reason that moves me."

"Speak what is in your mind, my Father."

"I have had in my heart to return to the country of the Illinois and preach the Gospel to those poor

people. Constantly in my thoughts are Red Calumet and his Peorias—that first tribe we met on this River of the Conception. I promised them to return or have another Blackrobe come and live in their cabins. There is a large cross erected on the bank before their village as a pledge of the fulfilment of that promise. I do not like to give my word to any Indian and not keep it."

The Blackrobe was silent while his lips moved in his favorite prayer to Mary Immaculate. Then he turned to his fellow voyager and announced: "We have accomplished the purpose of this expedition, for it is evident the River of the Conception empties into no body of water but the Mexican Gulf. We have settled that, so in God's Name let us turn the prows of our canoes to the north once more. Then you may report to Quebec and I—I may prepare to shepherd the other sheep and lambs who cry out to me so constantly."

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CHAPTER XVI

THE LONG PADDLE

THEN began what came to be known in the expedition as the "Long Paddle." It had been comparatively easy to descend the Great Water and, after the fashioning of the raft, easier. But now when they left the Akamsea village astern and turned their bows northward, new difficulties met the voyagers. Constantly they were forced to face what they had not experienced before—the full power of the River of the Conception.

The whitemen stopped with the Mitchigameas and were well received. Waving Grass warned Marquette: "Upstream is a large party of raiding Chickasaws. They are still burning and killing. They have taken many scalps. It will not be well if they sight my brothers." And he added the advice, "Do as we do when they are on the warpath. Paddle by night and lie up by day." In parting, he added, "May the Great Manitou, whom my white brothers worship, make them invisible to their enemies."

Weary league after league the little party, now shaggy haired and long bearded, fought their way up the silent mile-wide tide. They avoided the main current as much as possible by seeking the opposite bank or the easy water back of black islands. The constant paddling upstream taxed the energies of each to the utmost, and they were able to ascend at the most four or five leagues, paddling dusk to dawn.

At the breaking of the third dawn after leaving

the Mitchigamean village, while they were about to land on an island and hide through the day hours, they saw ahead the haze of much smoke. It floated lazily down and across the broad stream and by noon their camp was enveloped in a gray haze that at times made the eyes of all the party smart and run.

While it was still daylight, an early start was made and all that night they worked their way through the soundless solitudes of a gray watery world. Shortly after dawn the smoke of the burning forest fires enveloped them. Marquette and Joliet decided to use this smoke screen to get as quickly as possible above the ravaging Chickasaws.

By the dim sunlight they crept up the almost ghostly shore line of canebrake. Now they were in a long eddy that gave them the welcome help of a fair current. Then by the scarcely visible rim of ripple over a bar they worked. They heard the water rushing by snags and saw the yellow foam that collared the anchored driftwood. Suddenly the tall shape of a towering cottonwood would loom out of the smoke and be a landmark till it was swallowed up astern. Always the unbroken silences of the unpeopled shores accompanied them till even the woodsmen ceased to hum their songs and paddled, paddled, paddled the hours away.

At night the burning shores made the river more navigable and it was decided to keep on till they should be above the zone of fires. A day and a night the expedition paddled, while those off duty snatched troubled sleep.

Then a weary morning came when the veil of smoke lifted and they saw the hot sun once more.

It brightened the river and the spirits of the woodsmen. Crow Dog and No Flesh had a romp and a glorious swim in the warm shallow waters at the tail of the island they were encamped on. Flocks of bright parrakeets screeched in the nearby brush, and Crow Dog brought down enough to make himself a belt after the fashion of the Akamseas.

A whole day was spent in this camp and it was about this time Joliet noticed that Father Marquette's strength was failing. The Blackrobe passed the question off when his companion asked him.

"My strength! Our Lord gives and He takes. Provided I spend myself in His Service what does it matter! My only object is to place these copper-skinned children on the road to Paradise."

After that, Joliet put Peter, one of the strongest of the woodsmen, in the Blackrobe's canoe and gave Crow Dog secret orders to lose Marquette's paddle. So the Blackrobe had to take turns paddling with Peter and Jean, and thus he was only toiling half of his former stretch.

They were working up a low cutbank through a narrow chute back of an island where the sycamores almost met overhead. Marquette's canoe was an hundred feet ahead of Joliet's and was taking a sharp bend in the cutoff when it suddenly came upon a raft, being poled rapidly downstream. On the raft were an Indian, his squaw, and three children.

Quick steering averted a collision. The brave dropped his pole and sprang for his studded war-club. Jean and Peter had their muskets raised, as Marquette held up the calumet that always lay beside him.

When the brave saw the peace pipe he lowered his club.

"We come in peace," cried the Blackrobe in Illinois, and he was delighted to hear the strange Indian answer him in the same language.

"We also have peace in all our hearts."

The two boys and a girl who were on the raft had stubbed its progress, and Joliet's canoe, now coming up, lay beyond Marquette's. The Blackrobe conversed for a long time with the Indian. Then he translated aloud:

"This is Struck By Cow, with his squaw and children. The brave says a large party of Chickasaws crossed the river above us last night and is raiding and burning. His boy here, Squirrel Legs, caught sight of the Chickasaws' canoes and the family had time to hide and flee downstream. Struck By Cow says the Chickasaws will head for his village, which is about two leagues above. There will be much fighting for there is a large body of warriors in the village and they will have several scores to settle with their enemies."

Marquette and Joliet made a present of food and beads to the refugee family and when they had disappeared around the lower turn in the chute, the two whitemen went into council.

Their decision was to camp and sleep till it was dark, then paddle upstream and try to escape the notice of the raiding Chickasaws.

It turned out to be a black night with no stars. The expedition paddled out of the chute and into the vaster blackness of the river.

Two hours later, the canoes were coming to the

upper end of a reach and rounding a point, when they began to notice, reflected in the skies, the glow of a distant fire. With the dark bulk of the point astern and while they were paddling across the wide river to get out of the current, the glow became yellow flames mounting high into the sky.

Something bumped into Marquette's canoe. Before it caromed off into the darkness astern, the Black-robe looked down and saw a huddled shoulder with streaks of pale paint in strange designs.

Crow Dog whispered: "Ugh! Master, it is not good to meet a dead body in the water."

As the canoes crept along, the slave boy had the glasses on the distant glow in the skies. He exclaimed: "That is not a forest fire! Master, look through Makes Far Away Come Near and you will see cabins. That is the village of the fleeing family being put to the flame."

Marquette took the glasses. The boy was right. He called to Joliet: "Louis, if my memory is correct, we passed down this stretch of river by night on the raft and so missed seeing this unfortunate village."

When the canoes had made the crossing, Joliet gave the order: "Paddle rapidly, my bearded children, and let us get above this burning village. The Chickasaws are evidently victorious. We need to put a good Christian league between us and those demons."

The river was about a mile wide here and even under the further bank, along which the two canoes crept, the reflection began to make a reddish glow. A sudden change of wind brought the war cries across the water. The trees and dense undergrowth on an

island before the village, that up to this had obstructed the view, slid out of the way. Suddenly the whitemen in the two canoes had an unforgettable sight of a raid in progress.

The Blackrobe held his glasses to his eyes. Against the leaping flames of the flimsy reed cabins were silhouetted the dark figures of warriors fighting furiously. The ruddy glare threw dancing shadows high up on the trees. A tiny group almost over the water's edge were struggling, and further along another silent group showed where the squaws and children captives were herded.

Again the wind brought the harsh war cries, faint from the distance, and the wailing songs of the captives.

Needlessly, Joliet urged the woodsmen to greater exertion, and the canoes were paddled on till the burning village ceased to light up the bearded faces in the canoes and the waving reflections were lost on the water.

Then Crow Dog's sharp eye discovered another cutoff. Marquette drove his canoe into the dark tunnel and a few turns shut off all sounds of the fighting across the river.

Several hours later, before the gray of dawn broke, the tired voyagers went ashore in a thick fern-carpeted growth that dripped with moss.

All that next day, sentries woke their successors and then dropped into exhausted sleep. When night came, the Long Paddle against the current of the Great Water was resumed.

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CHAPTER XVII

BUFFALOES' LEAP

AN UNEVENTFUL week of heartbreaking paddling followed. Dusk had fallen an hour ago on a hard day, and Marquette and Joliet had not yet decided on the night's camp. Then as they were taking advantage of an eddy and drawing away from the dark mass of an island, Crow Dog whispered excitedly.

"Blackrobe Master, look!"

Quite distinctly upstream appeared several moving lights. Their reflection showed that they were over the water. Joliet called across from the other canoe: "My Father, it will be prudent to anchor here and investigate. That may be a Chickasaw encampment, though I think we are above their usual territory and approaching the place where we met the Tuscarora hunting party."

So the two canoes were turned into the dark western shore. As they drew nearer they made out the blacker bulk of a low cliff and, below, a narrow shelving shore. Here, out of the main current, anchors were let go and a guard posted.

Again the lights upstream moved, and Joliet, when the Blackrobe relieved him, reported that he thought he had heard shoutings. During Marquette's watch, growlings came from the neighboring cliff and he

heard animals fighting furiously. He recognized the howlings of wolves and the sharp yelps of coyotes.

Once the listening Blackrobe thought he heard in the distance dogs barking. He reasoned: "Where there are dogs there are friendly Indians. For if these forest children were on the warpath, they would leave their dogs in the villages."

No Flesh, at Marquette's side, was alert all night and growled repeatedly. Whenever the Blackrobe put his hand on his hound, he found him trembling.

When the weird night was almost over, the snarlings beyond the cliff ceased. The Blackrobe, his rosary slipping through his fingers, watched the first break in the eastern horizon broaden. Sounds multiplied—the awakening chirp of birds—the songs of mockers—especially loud was the far-off hammering of a woodpecker. A jay with flash of blue wing sat on a twig over the water. The shadows deserted the tangled purple underbrush. Then came the cool dim gray of the late July morning.

The increasing light showed the low cliff terminated scarcely two hundred yards upstream.

As Marquette prayed and watched, he saw something swimming downstream. At first, he thought it was an animal. Then as the swimming thing came closer, through his glasses he made it out to be a boy. With splashing overhand strokes the boy headed for the anchored canoes.

The Blackrobe woke Crow Dog. The slave boy took the glasses and recognized the swimmer.

"Ugh! Master, that is Found in the Grass. I will meet him."

Crow Dog dove over the side and struck out

towards the Tuscarora lad. When the two were alongside, Found in the Grass smiled up and announced: "He Hurls a Good Spear, my father, saw you from the cliff. He sent me to tell you that Stands First is upstream. We know the captain wishes you to share his fire."

The small Tuscarora gladly climbed over the stern of the Blackrobe's canoe. Soon the canoes were driven around the end of the point and there above the low shore were the hunting cabins of a large party of Tuscaroras.

Stands First welcomed the whitemen gravely. At the conclusion of his speech, he opened the amulet pouch that hung on his breast and took out a small medal of Mary Immaculate.

"Whiteman with the blackrobe, this is good war medicine. I have worn it in my amulet since you gave it to me. You paddled downstream and bad news came to our cabins. The squaws raised the Death Song. All our brothers who crossed the Great Water were ambushed by our enemies, the Chickasaws. I took a larger party. We crossed the Great Water. Our spies followed the trail and saw the Chickasaws. They did not see our spies. We fell on them at dawn. Many Chickasaws did not see the sun again. I took six scalp locks of our enemies. My warriors took more. We crossed back with nine captives. When they died our brothers were avenged. This is good war medicine you gave me. My heart is grateful. Whiteman with the blackrobe, stay with us a while and we will fill your bellies with meat, for the buffaloes are plentiful."

Stands First told Marquette that his Tuscaroras

were preparing for a great slaughter of buffaloes. The whitemen decided to remain for it.

Early next morning Marquette with Crow Dog and Found in the Grass set out for the place where they could watch the great hunt. The three followed a beaten trail along the bank of the Great Water till they came to a small grove of oaks that grew near the edge of a ravine.

"Whiteman and Crow Dog, you come with me and I will show you where to watch the hunt," called out Found in the Grass importantly.

The small Tuscarora lad led his companions to an oak tree near the edge of the ravine. Like a pair of squirrels the two boys climbed till they were hidden in the branches.

Found in the Grass called down: "Whiteman, come up quickly, for already I see the decoys."

Somewhat slower, the Blackrobe climbed up the tree. Near the eager boys, he braced himself in a crotch between stout branches.

He discovered the oak overlooked the water where the expedition had anchored for the night. Westward, the elevation commanded a view of a rolling prairie. South of the oaks lay the ravine, with a drop of maybe thirty feet.

Marquette turned his glasses and saw the dust raised by a slowly moving mass of buffaloes. Found in the Grass estimated them to be a herd of, at least, five hundred animals.

"Five hundred buffaloes!" exclaimed the Blackrobe; "the Tuscaroras will not need that much meat, will they?"

"No," replied Found in the Grass. "When the

herd goes over this cliff here, there will be brown and red heaps of buffaloes piled twenty feet high. The squaws will attack these with their knives. They only take the tongue and the flesh from the ribs. This flesh is divided into half and then spread on wooden gratings, three or four feet high. Bright fires smoke this meat. When it is rolled and dried it will keep for a long time."

"But what of the rest of the carcasses?"

"Whiteman, they belong to the wolves," Found in the Grass informed him. "The crows will tell them. All the wolves and coyotes within a day's lope from here will arrive tonight at this ravine we call Buffaloes' Leap. You will hear them. They fight over the flesh. You come back with me tomorrow and you will see the buzzards will have many wolves' bodies, besides buffaloes' to feast on."

"What a useless slaughter!" thought Marquette. "These Tuscaroras will eat their fill now and very likely starve when the winter comes. The Indians are all heedless children!"

The Blackrobe looked again and saw that the herd had moved nearer. The keen-sighted Found in the Grass informed him: "The hunters have surrounded that herd and they are all dead buffaloes. The foolish animals do not know it yet, but our hunters are already driving them over Buffaloes' Leap."

Marquette glanced down at the steep cut in the earth and now noticed for the first time the bleached skulls and bones that lay about the bottom of the ravine.

"Twice a year," the Tuscarora lad informed him,

"our hunters drive the buffaloes over this cliff. It is easier than hunting them with bows and arrows."

Crow Dog saw the bleached skulls and they reminded him: "Blackrobe Master, when I was with my master, Bear's Head, the Sioux boys used such skulls. They called them Buffalo Canoes. They would save the large ones from the hunt till the snow came. Then they would take their skulls to the hillside where it was slippery. Ugh! It was much fun to sit in the skull and race down the frozen hill, guiding the Buffalo Canoe by the twin horns. Sometimes the canoes would collide and we would roll over and over till we were buried in a snowbank at the foot of the hill. It was much fun! I saw two boys break their legs once."

The Blackrobe interrupted his slave boy:

"Found in the Grass, are these hunters too?"

Marquette pointed. Some Tuscaroras were coming up under the oaks, and their squaws dragged huge buffalo skins.

Found in the Grass explained: "These decoys will show themselves when the herd is close. They will lead them towards the ravine. Wait and see."

The herd was being invisibly driven nearer and nearer to the oak grove. Father Marquette swept the horizon with his glasses. He saw no signs of Tuscaroras, though he knew an hundred hunters were scattered in an invisible circle around the doomed herd.

Then into his vision came several wolves.

"They are not real wolves, whiteman," Found in the Grass replied, when Marquette called out his discovery. "They are creeping Tuscarora decoys

hidden under wolf heads. The buffaloes allow wolves near them. But when the time comes, these men will stand up and throw off their skins."

The nearby decoys had crept under the buffalo skins and had taken their places beyond the oak grove. Several old bulls on the outer edge of the herd were rolling on the ground like horses in a field. Beyond them a cow with her calf grazing nearby was throwing up eddies of dust with her hoofs.

An old bull now noticed one of the prairie wolves. He raised his massive head suspiciously. Then reassured, the bull looked fixedly at the seemingly harmless smaller animal. He lowered his head and uttered a dull and muffled roar. After that he went on grazing. The prairie wolf edged closer and the bull and cow and calf moved nearer to the oak grove.

The two Indian boys sat silently watching their elders skilfully driving the herd to its destruction.

Now the Tuscaroras with the buffalo heads and skins imperceptibly rose out of the prairie grass and showed themselves to the advancing herd. Several bulls eyed the lone buffaloes suspiciously and then resumed their grazing.

Suddenly Found in the Grass whispered: "Watch now, whiteman. See those three old bulls there"—he pointed to the nearer animals—"see, their tails are twitching. They have winded some hunters. They know that men are near and they are suspicious. Those are sure signs. Soon the hunters will show themselves. But we must not yell, for we are in the way the buffaloes are to pass and we must not frighten them."

Through the glasses it was evident that a feeling

of uneasiness was spreading over the entire herd. Dull and muffled bellowings had increased. The calves sought the sides of their mothers. Massive bulls were gathering in an outer fringe around the herd. They were furiously pawing the ground like angry rams. Marquette could imagine their reddish eyes glaring under bristling tufts of brown hair.

Then a bull on the further edge of the herd tossed his head and bellowed. As if that were the prearranged signal, the circle of prairie wolves threw off their skins and stood up. Arrow after arrow was discharged into the violently whirling mass. Somewhere off to the westward guns boomed, and Crow Dog shouted: "The woodsmen are firing their thundersticks! The woodsmen are firing their thundersticks!"

A ring of arrows encircled the trapped herd on all sides except toward the oak grove and the hidden ravine. The watchers saw the huge animals move towards them.

Now the decoy buffaloes that had been standing as if grazing threw up their shaggy heads and began to lumber nearer. Close behind them came the van of the thundering herd, now headed directly for the hidden ravine. When the Tuscarora decoys were under the oaks, they suddenly threw off the buffalo hides and swung into the branches overhead.

The first of the maddened animals were scarcely an hundred feet away. The Blackrobe and the two boys felt the ground shake and the oak swayed as though an earthquake was on. All three clung to the branches. Through the clouds of dust that rose up and choked them, they had occasional glimpses of the

almost solid brown tide that poured by underneath their oak. Bulls and cows milled about, tiny dead calves lifted up by the crush of many bodies were carried along on the backs of the adult animals.

One caught in a lower branch. Found in the Grass, yelling at the top of his voice, scrambled down to push it off. The boy was jarred loose and lost his balance. He clutched wildly and a branch snapped. Down he fell on the struggling calf. Both dropped lower and landed on the back of an immense bull. The boy grabbed the hairy hide and was carried along.

Marquette saw the small Tuscarora clutch desperately at a branch of a tree nearer the edge of the ravine. Then a dust cloud rolled up.

Crow Dog shouted above the din: "Master, hold on! This tree will go and we will go with it. We are all dead men!"

But the Blackrobe did not hear him. He was thinking of the cheerful little Tuscarora who had been swept to his death. He prayed, "Mary Immaculate, keep him here till I have the opportunity to reach him! If you have ever heard my prayers, hear them now!"

Below, like a brown river in flood, the rest of the herd milled by.

"Look! Look!" The cry came from Crow Dog.

The Blackrobe followed the direction of his slave's outstretched hand and saw on the back of a plunging bull the sleek figure of a frightened wild cat. The cat was tearing at the flanks of the bull and being swept along.

Father Marquette remembered the ravine and he

shifted his position. There, behind them where the sheer side of the cliff began, he saw the plunging buffaloes disappearing into the depths of the ravine like logs over a falls. Fifty of the shaggy animals went over and another fifty crowded and milled and were pushed onward to their own destruction as he watched.

Now a circle of Tuscarora hunters appeared and these with yells and arrows were driving the stragglers toward the ravine. The crazed animals charged ahead. Even one whose hind leg was broken by an arrow dragged itself after its mates.

The dust arose and evaporated. The Blackrobe and Crow Dog dropped to the torn and trampled ground. Close to the edge of the cliff they came upon a fresh spring that bubbled up under a rock. Thirstily both stooped and drank. Looking down at the base of the cliff they saw a brown mass of broken buffaloes being slaughtered indiscriminately by the main Tuscarora hunting party.

Sick at heart, Marquette turned away, thinking of the small Tuscarora beneath those struggling beasts.

A shout from Crow Dog attracted the Blackrobe.

There, a few paces from the edge, lying where the cruel hoofs had ground it, was the trampled body of Found in the Grass.

Marquette stooped and gathered up in his arms the small Tuscarora. He felt the heart. There was still a faint beat. "Thank God and His Immaculate Mother!" breathed the Blackrobe.

Quickly he carried his light burden till he knelt beside the spring. As the Saving Waters fell on

the boy's brow, there was a slight twitching of the eyelids. They opened and the black eyes of little Found in the Grass were looking directly into Marquette's face.

But they did not see the weeping Blackrobe. . . .

Crow Dog found He Hurls a Good Spear. That tall Tuscarora father came and with him were several squaws. He looked stolidly at the crushed form of his small son, while the squaws broke into the wailing notes of the Death Song.

"Come, whiteman in the blackrobe," said He Hurls a Good Spear, "leave the body to the squaws. Stands First wishes you to join him in the ravine."

And that was the last Marquette saw of Found in the Grass.

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CHAPTER XVIII

THE BEARS' SLEEPING PLACE

THAT evening there was an Eat All Feast in the Tuscarora camp A sorcerer made an address to Sun, thanking him for lighting the hunters so that they had success with the buffaloes. All during the sorcerer's harangue the Tuscaroras, according to custom, squatted about the fires and gorged themselves on buffalo meat.

Finally Marquette heard Stands First say to an elder: "My brother, I am unable to finish my meat. Take pity on me. I am a dead man if you do not give me life. Eat what I have left and I will make you a present of three elk teeth."

The elder complied and, as he finished the captain's food, the sorcerer stopped talking to Sun. He took a cake of tobacco, broke it in two and threw it into the fire. This was the signal that the Eat All Feast was over.

But the assembly did not break up. The hunters lay there in the flickering lights of the fires, listening to the story tellers.

At length, Stands First said: "Whiteman in the black robe, there is among us one from the north. He is a Pottawattomie who has married into our tribe. He was absent when you stopped with us on your way downstream. He will tell you of a great hunt among his people."

The Tuscarora captain called out to the circle, listening in the outer darkness: "He Who Resembles A Foot, come here."

The request of the captain was repeated, and a strange Indian came limping into the camplight. Crow Dog whispered: "Ugh! Master, this brave has been scalped. Look."

"Tell the Whitemen about the bears," ordered Stands First.

The Pottawattomie began simply: "You know, whitemen and Tuscaroras, to the north there is the Lake of the Illinois (Lake Michigan) and on its shore is a spot my people call The Bears' Sleeping Place.

"Many moons ago I went there with Little Big Man, who was my brother. A black bear was just scooping out a fish when I saw him. I crept closer and the black bear scooped out and ate another fish. Then when I was within arrow flight I stood up and bent my bow and wounded the black bear. But I did not have time to kill him and he charged at me. Again and again I shot an arrow into him till his shoulder resembled a porcupine's. Still he came on. My quiver was empty. I held my knife. He clawed it out of my hand. I turned and ran. So did the bear. My foot slipped on driftwood and the bear was on top of me. His eyes were red. He was very angry. With his claws he caught my hair and he pulled. I pulled the other way and my scalp lock came off. It was very painful. I tried to crawl away. Little Big Man heard my shouts. He hurled his tomahawk. The wound only infuriated the black

bear more. He charged at my brother and killed him. I thought the black bear would return to me.

"I opened my medicine bag slightly and offered it to the north, the west, the south, and the east. My Manitou heard and he put into the black bear the desire to go away.

"The other Pottawattomies found me. I had lost much blood and was very weak. When they brought me to the cabins, my father's squaw thought I was to die. She called the sorcerers of the village. Three came. They consulted. Then two sorcerers took me under the arms. I was not able to walk upright, so they held me. There were the embers. They walked me barefooted over them. Ugh! Never had I felt such pain, even when the black bear took my scalp away.

"The sorcerers walked me back to my mat. They danced and consulted again.

"Next night five sorcerers came to my father's squaw's cabin. The old man sorcerer sucked my wounds. And before my eyes he extracted a bear's tooth. Then another. I saw the teeth with my eyes as I see your slave boy here. The old man sorcerer showed the two teeth to my father's squaw and to me. The old man sorcerer said to my father's squaw: 'Dear sister, He Who Resembles A Foot will not die. He will live. But you called us too late to make him walk without a limp. These are what were killing him. Who can resist my Manitou! Now that your son is cured, it only remains to give a feast.'

"My father's squaw was glad to give the sorcerers a feast. So I lived and when I was able to

hobble about, the tomtoms called all the braves of my village to the council rock.

"It is not wise to let the bears kill a Pottawattomie and not avenge it. This I thought and I had a plan that would make the bears remember.

"Now it was the time for the leaves to fall. You know, then the bears take on fat. In summer, when the bears eat toads and snakes, they are thin. They sleep through the wintertime and sometimes they even retain or increase their fat. I do not know how they do so, for if I slept all winter I would be thin like a bow in the springtime. But the bears do. This I have seen and I know, whitemen.

"When the snow is on the ground they sleep in the hollows of trees, especially the squaw bears. Sometimes the warrior bears sleep on a mat of fir branches. These branches they break off. I myself have watched as many as five bears standing up to a fir tree and breaking off the branches to make their winter bed mats.

"All these habits I knew and so I planned to visit them when they lay down to sleep. I told these things to the council. They listened and decided to hunt the sleeping bears and avenge Little Big Man. So a party of fifty took the dogs and crossed the snows on their shoes. I went along on a sled.

"I fell asleep on the sled and in my dreams I saw Missibizi. Whitemen, he is not like any animal you see with your eyes when they are open. But when he comes in a dream to a Pottawattomie, there will be good hunting. When I awoke I offered tobacco to Missibizi.

"Three days we tracked the bears with dogs, till

the dogs were so tired that they refused to trail the bears. Then we came near The Bears' Sleeping Place. We hid and our scouts brought back the news there were many more bears than they had ever seen sleeping there."

"And you killed many bears?" questioned Father Marquette as the Pottawattomie paused.

"Blackrobe, we killed more than three hundred. The hunters clipped off their claws and teeth for necklaces. And the squaws complained with angry words at the skins they had to cure.

"But my brother was avenged and there were not so many black bears who went to sleep at The Bears' Sleeping Place next time the nuts fell. Those who lived learnt that it is not good to kill a Pottawattomie or even to scalp one.

"I have finished, whitemen."

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CHAPTER XIX

RUSHING WIND

THE days after the Tuscaroras were left astern were spent in seeking the easier waters back of islands. Often the party was obliged to cross the full current and lose a league in the struggle. But the Long Paddle kept on.

Numerous turkey flocks and sometimes whole clouds of wood pigeons were sighted. Occasionally where the bluffs receded and the worn-out voyagers were toiling up a low bank, Crow Dog would point out the dust of grazing herds. The sight always brought up in Marquette's mind the crushed figure of little Found in the Grass.

When the meat Stands First had given the whitemen was exhausted, a stop was made. The woodsmen hunted and, following the wasteful Indian custom, cut out only the tongues and choice steaks. The rest of the huge carcasses was left to the ever vigilant buzzards and the wolves, that were never seen, but whose howls were heard when the expedition made its nightly encampment on an island.

The fevers of the summer river got into the bones of the men. They grew gaunt and their beards and hair were shaggy. Father Marquette suffered most, as his frame was not that of a hardy woodsman.

The anxious eyes of Joliet noticed that his friend and companion was steadily weakening, and finally

he refused to let the Blackrobe touch a paddle. So Marquette became the lookout man and he spent long hours scanning the green-timbered banks and bluffs that they endlessly sighted, breasted, and dropped astern.

A week went by; almost another; and they were now in the clear water above the wide muddy river that poured into the Great Water from the west. It had taken the two canoes the best part of a day to battle across this windswept mouth of the future Missouri.

One afternoon when the canoes were thirty yards off a dense low shore, six or seven arrows were shot at the party. One lodged in the side of the Blackrobe's canoe. The crafts were quickly pointed out into the stream and no more signs were seen of the hidden hostile Indians.

Then along willow-banked shores and remembered bluffs and island encampments they paddled. The Thunder Bird was seen again on the far cliff and Crow Dog crouched in fear till it was safely astern.

One morning they woke to find themselves lost in a gray circle of fog and light rain. The fog caused loud frequent peals of thunder. Nevertheless, they set out and steered by the smoky ghosts of big trees on a cutbank. They toiled above a lot of snags that fairly roared. Again, they heard the wash of the current and they paddled till they breasted the solid white that collared a pile of dead brush.

Then as Joliet edged to the westward to find easier water, for the voyagers were experiencing the

strength of the current, his canoe was swallowed up in the fog.

Several times Marquette thought he saw his companion's canoe dart ghostlike across the fog. Crow Dog shouted at intervals and Peter, in Joliet's canoe, replied. But they missed each other. In the silences between, Marquette could hear the whir and drip of paddles.

The shouts of Charles, who had a voice like a bull buffalo, gradually became fainter. Thunder pealed. The shouts seemed to come from ahead. Then to the east. Then they ceased, as if a door had closed tight between the canoes.

Suddenly Crow Dog called: "Blackrobe Master, there is an island with tall trees between us."

Marquette ordered the canoe turned to the west and, sure enough, after twenty strokes there loomed out of the gray wall the ghostly outline of a high bank. That it was a large island was quite evident from the growth of timber.

There was nothing to do but paddle till the dividing island was astern and then hope to re-meet Joliet.

Occasionally a startled bird winged out of the fog and disappeared again into the misty circle that surrounded the solitary canoe. A huge channel catfish broke surface nearby and startled all.

After an hour of light rains and decreasing thunder, Crow Dog thought he heard shouts. Peter and René, in Marquette's canoe, roared back. They stopped with poised, dripping oars to listen for an answer. But the ever baffling gray silence settled around them.

René sighted a tree again and they were hugging

the fog-shrouded shore when the sharp-eyed Crow Dog observed: "Blackrobe Master, see the willows. This is the tail of another island. There should be turtles' eggs in that sand! Ugh! They are good to eat."

Ignoring this last remark, Marquette called to the woodsmen: "If this is another island, we will go ashore and wait till the fog clears. The Sieur, I believe, will do the same. He will not leave the vicinity of this island that separated us till we are reunited. Land here, my children. And you, Crow Dog, go turtle-egg hunting, if you wish."

Peter and René grounded the canoe on the wet sand. Then all hauled it under the dripping willows and tilted it to form a rude shelter.

Crow Dog got a stick and, with No Flesh nosing at his heels, started after the eggs. Soon he shouted delightedly and Marquette saw him running up with his hands full of perfectly round white eggs, slightly smaller than walnuts.

He explained happily: "Ugh! Crow Dog was right! I poked my stick into the sand pile till I felt a soft place. I dug like No Flesh. There were fifty—sixty eggs in the hole. Ugh! I will fry these. They will be good!"

"Take this sack. Go back and get more," directed the smiling Blackrobe. "Then we shall all have fried turtle eggs when we light a fire again."

The slave boy was off to his sandbar.

An hour later the fog lifted partially and Marquette saw they had landed on a small island. Less than one hundred yards downstream was the towhead of the large island that had divided the party.

So the canoe was put back into the water. Crow Dog jealously guarded the sack that contained several hundred turtlé eggs. Paddling back to the large island the fog enveloped the canoe. René found a little stream that was hardly wide enough to admit the canoe's bows. The thick brush grew down and met overhead. Into this dripping green tunnel the craft was driven.

Then the slave boy thought he heard shouts. All listened, and the shouts seemed to come from lower down in the heart of the island.

At the Blackrobe's order every one shouted. There was no mistake this time. Answering shouts came through the gray fog.

Leaving René on guard, the rest worked their way into the dripping brush. Over the bank it was better going. Then suddenly the shouts were distinctly nearer. Marquette recognized Charles' deep voice. He called back gratefully. They drove along. The answering shouts became louder.

At length several figures loomed out of the fog ahead. Marquette recognized the frayed deerskin coat of Louis Joliet and behind him stalked the burly Charles and five strange Indians.

As they walked closer the Blackrobe noticed the five had their hair clipped, leaving four tufts of hair either side of their ears Their faces were vermilion painted. Their bodies had tattooed panels of figures. Around their necks were collars of flat pieces of porcelain, and in their ears hung little stones—blue and red and white.

One of the savages, on seeing Marquette, threw himself at the Blackrobe's side and, clasping the

metal crucifix that hung from his cincture, cried in Illinois: "Blackrobe, do you know me?"

Marquette looked at the tattooed Indian. He was evidently an Illinois. Before the Blackrobe could speak, the Indian fumbled at the amulet that he wore around his bare neck and, opening the young squirrel-skin pouch, brought out a folded and faded picture.

Handing it to Marquette he said: "Blackrobe, you gave this to me at the village across from The Island That Goes and Comes twice ten moons ago."

Marquette unfolded the frayed picture and saw it was one of Mary Immaculate—one that had come to him in a packet of letters from France.

"You say you listened to the Prayer when I preached it in the cabins of the Ottawas at the Mission of Holy Spirit?"

"Yes, Blackrobe. I am Rushing Wind and these with me are of my hunting party. We crossed the Great Water to seek the buffalo, but we found fresh tracks of a large Sioux war party and we were paddling back to our side of the Great Water when the fog came down. We landed on this island.

"Then we heard shouts. We kept silent, for we feared the Sioux. But I recognized some of the words that came through the air and they were whitemen's words. We had heard from some of Red Calumet's warriors that your canoes were downstream. Then we showed ourselves and your brothers came ashore.

"Come with us and eat," he concluded abruptly.

A short walk brought them to several hunting cabins. Before these were fires with the cross bar and forked stick for the kettle. The aroma of roast-

ing trout mingled with the pleasantly acrid wood smoke.

When Crow Dog saw the fires he opened his sack. "Give them to me, Little Turtle Egg Hunter," said one of the Illinois. A few minutes later the eggs were frying appetizingly.

The fog hung on the island and the waters all that afternoon. But the delay brought good fortune to Marquette's party. For, as the whitemen sat around the fires that evening, the Illinois captain explained to the Blackrobe: "You and your white brothers do not have to paddle up the Great Water much further. Above here turn into the River of the Illinois and come back with me to Kaskaskia. This is a great village of seventy-four cabins. Stay with us a few days and rest. Then some of our young men will escort you to a portage that brings you to another river. This soon leads to the lake of the Illinois (Michigan) and up that you will return to your cabins much swifter, for the waters do not run against your canoes.

"My people desire to meet the Blackrobe. They will feast you and listen to the Prayer."

Another warrior entreated: "Blackrobe, have pity on us. Let us go with you and take you into our village. You hold the Manitou's voice in your hands and we wish to hear it."

Later, one of the Illinois came to the Blackrobe and, crouching at his moccasins, besought him: "Hear the words of Rushing Wind and come with our canoes."

The Illinois stood up and, opening his hand suddenly, sprinkled tobacco over the Blackrobe.

"You are a Manitou. Come and show us the way to the cabins up there." He pointed to the sky, "I offer you this tobacco in sacrifice."

"What are you doing, brother?" exclaimed the astonished Blackrobe. "I am nothing; but He Who made all, is the Manitou."

"Well then"—the Illinois scattered another handful of tobacco on the ground and looking up said: "To you who made heaven and earth, I offer this tobacco that you may soften the heart of your Blackrobe and make him come with us."

"I will see my companions and I will come," promised Marquette.

* * * * * * *

CHAPTER XX

THE RIVER OF THE ILLINOIS

THE skies cleared up the next morning and the expedition, convoyed by Rushing Wind's canoes, left astern the island on which they had been fog-bound. The bad weather of the past few days had further weakened the Blackrobe. He was obliged to lie on a reed mat in his canoe and let the others take up the burden of the Long Paddle. Endlessly his rosary slipped through his fingers as he petitioned Mary Immaculate for the souls of these redmen he had met along her mighty river.

Crow Dog, with his master's glasses to his eyes, called attention to the discovery of animals on either bank. Twice the slave boy sighted stray groups of buffaloes, grazing close to the bank. Another time, he pointed out some spotted deer who stood like alert statuettes in the shoal water and watched the fleet of canoes pass. Once, he discovered a wild cat sleeping on a branch. Again, when the canoes were being paddled in the easy water close under a grass-fringed shore, his quick action sent an arrow through an imprudent swamp rabbit. The boy dove over and swam back triumphantly with his warm captive.

On the second morning, as the canoes were coming abreast of a gloomy piney point, Crow Dog, through the glasses, made out figures on the further shore.

He shouted his news to Rushing Wind: "Men are fishing upstream!"

The captain replied: "Slave boy, that is the Cohakia fishing village. It is at the mouth of the River of the Illinois. They are friends. We stop there."

Gradually a dozen brownish cabins came into sight. They were arched over framework of poles, covered with rush mats closely interwoven. Each was large enough to contain three or four fires. That is, six or eight families.

The birchbark fleet had been sighted now, and Rushing Wind exchanged peace signals with the fishermen.

When the voyagers disembarked on the sandy strip before the cluster of cabins, a group of Cohakias awaited them. On the bare upper parts of the men's bodies were tattooed panels with the rude outlines of bears, turtles, buffaloes; the manitous of their clans.

The Cohakia captain singled out the Blackrobe and greeted him kindly.

"You are the one who prays and instructs. I knew from our brothers, the Peorias, that you had paddled downstream. We have some squaws here who heard your words when you lived in the cabins by the shores of the Lake of Copper. I am Old Fish. They have told me. My brothers and I are poor, but what we have is yours. Go into all our cabins. Sleep on the best mats. Eat from any kettle. They are all yours, whiteman who prays and instructs. We see that you are weak. Our hearts are heavy. For we wish you to speak the Manitou words to us."

Marquette rose above his weariness and, having presented Old Fish with a gift of beads and a clasp knife, was assisted by Joliet and Peter to a flat rock that stood to the north of the cabins. The whole village grouped around the Blackrobe.

He told the assembly: "My children, for a long time I have desired to see you. Now that I have the happiness, my heart is bursting. Think of the joy that a father has who tenderly loves his children when he sees them after they have been in great danger. This joy is mine. Although you do not follow the Prayer, yet I look on you as my children and have a father's tenderness towards you. For you are all the children of the Great Manitou Who has given life to you as well as to those who follow the Prayer. He has made a happy hunting land up there"—the Blackrobe pointed to the blue sky—"and He has made it for you as well as for those who pray. He loves you as He loves them. Yet I am sorrowful, thinking that you may not enter that beautiful land of delights up there.

"My children, I see by the poles and emblems before your cabins that you worship the Sun, whom you call the Old Man Above. I wish to teach you to worship the Manitou, Who made the sun and the earth and all creatures.

"Your captain, Old Fish, has told me that many here desire that I remain and teach them the Prayer. You see how weak I am. It is difficult for me to raise my hand. With my companions I have paddled down and now up the Great Water. It has made me very weak. I cannot stay with you, for I must go back to the north where my Mission of Saint Fran-

cis Xavier is. There I will spend the time necessary for me to restore my strength.

"You know no sorcerer can say of me that my moccasins have no bottom. I speak truth."

Loosening the crucifix that hung at his belt, the Blackrobe lifted it feebly. "See, this is the sign of Him Who made heaven and earth. By it I pledge you my word. If I get strong again, I will surely come back to this country of the Illinois and go from village to village and teach you all the words you must hear to follow the Prayer."

While the whitemen were eating, an old squaw pushed through the fringe of villagers that silently watched the voyagers. To the Blackrobe's surprise she spoke in Huron: "You who pray and instruct, hear Black Crow Wing. My brave, my two tall sons, my daughter listened to your Manitou words when you spoke in the Prayer Cabin on the shores of the Lake of Copper. You made them followers of the Prayer. I said they had no sense. It was foolish to pray to the Manitou of the whitemen, for he does not love Hurons. He drives them from land to land. He loves only their enemies. I did not speak with a split tongue. For my brave and my two tall sons, the summer after they followed the Prayer, were taken by raiding Sioux. They never came back to my cabin. That nut time my daughter died of smallpox. Black Crow Wing was left alone. I met this Old Fish. I became his squaw.

"Now you come to his village. I am afraid he will listen to your Manitou words and I will be left alone again."

The Blackrobe listened patiently to the wrinkled

old squaw's torrent of words. He was explaining that the followers of the Prayer were happy in the cabins of the Manitou above, when shouts from the shore broke up the interview.

A large war party of Kaskaskias had come down the River of the Illinois and was rounding the point. As they paddled towards the village, the whitemen counted the war fleet. There were twenty-odd canoes and nearly fifty warriors.

Later, Crow Dog came running up to Marquette with the information: "There are three Peoria warriors whom I know with these Kaskaskias. They are coming to meet you."

On the slave boy's heels came the painted Peoria braves carrying their long battle shields. The Blackrobe did not remember them, but they had evidently been present when he visited Red Calumet's villages.

One finished his speech by saying: "Blackrobe, your tree still stands above the bank that leads to our villages. Whenever we see it we remember your promise. Once when two of our warriors had their knives raised to slay each other, Red Calumet pointed to it and said to them, 'Behold the tree of the Blackrobe! He teaches us to pray and not lose our tempers.' When he said this, both warriors lowered their knives."

Seeing Crow Dog standing eagerly at Marquette's side, the Peoria beckoned him to come nearer. Then the warrior asked: "Blackrobe, Red Calumet sent this young slave with you down the Great Water. Has he been faithful?"

"Most faithful," the Blackrobe assured the warrior.

"Then you should not look so weak."

Turning to the silent Crow Dog the Peoria commanded: "Slave boy, you stay near this Blackrobe and do what Red Calumet would do if he were near. Stay with him all through the white months when the snow is on the ground and the water is locked in the rivers. And while you are with the Blackrobe in his cabin in the north, listen attentively and learn the Prayer. Then when you come back to Moingwena and Red Calumet asks you questions you can answer like the Blackrobe."

"You speak wise words," said Marquette. "When my Crow Dog knows enough, I myself will pour the Saving Water on his forehead and make him a follower of the Prayer. This I promise him and you."

Marquette reached for the Peoria's arrowproof shield, made of buffalo skins, that was long enough to cover the whole body of the warrior.

"And now as you tell me that you are on the warpath and go to meet the raiding Senecas of the Iroquois nation, I will tell you this. Paint the sign of my tree on each of your shields."

The Blackrobe asked for vermilion and drew crosses on the three shields.

"Paint this sign on your shields and tell your Kaskaskia brothers to do the same. Then fear not the Senecas. Long ago a Great Captain who did not yet follow the Prayer, painted this emblem on his warriors' shields and they were victorious. Do likewise and the Manitou Who made heaven and earth will be with you."

"The Blackrobe always says wise words," said the Peorias; "we will do so."

Red Calumet's three warriors had not been gone long when Black Crow Wing again sought the Black-robe. She had a young squaw with her.

"You who pray and instruct, listen to Black Crow Wing. I told you my daughter followed the Prayer and she died. You say she is happy in the cabins of the Great Manitou. Black Crow Wing does not understand this. She will tell you why.

"In my Huron cabin my daughter had ten slaves. They got the wood. They drew the water. They kept up the fire. My daughter had to do none of these things. Then she died of the smallpox and you say she went to the cabins of the Manitou. There she will have great difficulty in learning how to do squaw's work. So she cannot be happy.

"Since you came to this village I have thought how to make her happy. This young slave is mine. She knows how to get wood and draw water. She keeps the fire bright. Instruct her in the words of the Prayer. When she knows them, I will kill her with my tomahawk and then she will go to the Manitou's cabins and be my daughter's slave. My daughter will be happy then. Do this favor for me, you who pray and instruct, and I will give you five buffalo robes. There are not five finer robes in this village."

Black Crow Wing did not understand the Black-robe's firm refusal, and she raised her offer to eight—ten robes—all she had.

In anger Black Crow Wing left the cabin.

• • • • • • •

CHAPTER XXI

THE DYING MAN WHO WALKS

THE old squaw, Black Crow Wing, was hardly gone when Louis Joliet came up.

"My Father," he reported, "I have had the woodsmen erect a large cross on the point where it will be visible from the Great Water and this River of the Illinois we ascend on the morrow. Come now and bless it."

Very weakly Marquette rose and walked beside his companion towards the point. "Verily, he is the Dying Man Who Walks," thought Joliet as he remembered the name the Cohakias were calling the Blackrobe.

The two came to the sandy strip where the rivers met. Here a crowd of curious Cohakias were watching in wonder the rude French record of the voyage that Peter and Jean had just finished cutting into the wood.

As the worn-looking Blackrobe approached, leaning heavily on the arm of Joliet, the woodsmen fell away. In silence they watched Marquette as he made the Sign of the Cross over this high cross that would be visible to any whitemen who should come after them.

When the blessing was over, the Blackrobe seated himself on a fallen bit of gray driftwood that the last flood had flung on the point. The effort to walk

this far had exhausted him and he was glad to rest there, with his eyes fixed on the deep shadows of the distant western shore of the River of the Conception. Marquette was soon lost in reverie.

Seeing this, Joliet and the woodsmen withdrew and left the solitary Blackrobe to his thoughts.

They were pleasant, for he was thinking of this mighty stream and the weeks he had spent on its bosom—those he had met—their wants—ignorances—his meager successes. And there came into his mind that verse "Unless the grain of wheat falling into the ground die, itself remaineth alone. But if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit."

Across the calm waters, above the shadowy bluff, the whole sky was a gorgeous glory, where gold and gray islands and continents were divided by broad rivers and seas of Mary Immaculate's deep blue.

The "Dying Man Who Walks" looked long into his last sunset over the Great Water and he seemed to see in it a fulfilment of this verse and his own life. The glory of the sunset would shortly die out—his day was far spent—he had not brought forth the fruit he would have desired.

Softly he murmured: "Yet, what consolation, O my Mother, even in my blundering way, to have made your Son known to those who have never heard of Him!"

Lone he sat there while the glory in the heavens imperceptibly blurred—islands ran into rivers and merged into new groupings of vaster, distant, golden continents.

The Blackrobe was seeing beyond this sunset. . . .

How long he had been there he did not know, but

suddenly he realized that his fellow explorer was seated on the same driftlog.

When Joliet saw Marquette had noticed him, he began to quote enthusiastically: "When I get back to Quebec, I am going to report to Monsieur, the Count de Frontenac, our Governor, that settlers in this country need not spend ten years cutting and burning down trees. A settler could plow the day of his arrival. If no oxen from France could be brought here, he could use the buffalo of these prairies. He could plant vines—graft fruit trees—dress hides for shoes. From the hair of the buffalo his wife could spin clothes finer than most of those brought from Europe. The only thing wanting to our settlers, as far as my observations go, is salt."

"And that, Louis, I have heard our Fathers at Three Rivers say is found plentifully in the lands of the Iroquois. Soon that land will be open."

"The Iroquois—they are snakes in the grass! I would exterminate them as we do wolves in France, when winter hunger drives them into the towns. I would never trust them, my Father," vehemently exclaimed Louis Joliet.

"Poor Iroquois!" commented the Blackrobe, his eyes fixed on the gorgeous western skies, "God alone can give firmness to their fickle minds and touch their hearts while we Blackrobes stammer in their ears. Yet I firmly believe that like the grain of wheat that fell into the ground, the blood of our good Father Jogues will bring forth much fruit there. His pleadings these twenty-seven years before the Throne of Grace will yet win those neglected wild children, and that land will one day be as peaceful as it is fruitful.

"It has happened thus in all the countries where Christianity flourishes today. First, poor pagans, neglected children of God. Then missionaries—some of whom were worthy to join that precious white-robed company that follow the Lamb whithersoever He goeth—and then came grace into those lands and the seeds the pioneer priests planted, and died in the planting—" Marquette lovingly repeated this last phrase "—and died in the planting, became mighty trees. So it will happen, as well in the Iroquois cantons as in this mid-American wilderness.

"Not in my day, Louis, which is close unto evening, nor in yours, but later. This I know as I know God lives. This is my hope and my consolation!

"Ah!" the Blackrobe continued, his brown eyes lighting with zeal, "I believe that these weary weeks on the River of the Conception have not been in vain. Had all this voyage caused but the salvation of a single soul, I should deem all my fatigue well repaid. And I have reason to believe this when I remember Long Fox—that sorcerer's papoose—little Found in the Grass. They were the first reapings."

Marquette stood up. He had forgotten his companion. His eyes were tranced. . . .

Joliet heard him whispering: "So there is ahead of me a bitter winter—another—and then on a blue-skied May morning, above blue lonely waters,—in a wretched cabin in the midst of forests and bereft of all human succor—the lovely death of Francis Xavier!"

The voice died away and Louis Joliet instinctively dropped to his knees, knowing he had heard words that were not for his ears.

He saw his beloved Blackrobe was gazing into the glory that was beyond the sunset. What he was seeing there brought a pleased smile to his worn features.

The voice began again: "What a harvest! What a mighty harvest! Ah, Mother Immaculate, what a privilege to let thy unworthy son start this mid-American planting!" And again: "What a mighty harvest! Greater than Xavier's!" . . .

When the Blackrobe noticed his silent companion, he cried: "Louis, Louis, I have seen with the eyes of Faith my worthier successors gathering in a mighty harvest—not alone of these red children, but of the children of your settlers, who, in the days after our days, will people these fertile prairies."

The "Dying Man Who Walks" sank back.

"I grow weaker, Louis mine. It is God's Will. He and His Immaculate Mother are very good to me. Leave me here yet a while."

Reverently Louis Joliet withdrew. He looked back once ere the trees hid the point. Marquette, bathed in the rays of the setting sun, was still gazing fixedly out across his River of the Conception, and what he was seeing was most desirable.

Joliet never forgot the memory of that indelible picture.

When the sun was well under the distant bluff, Joliet called Crow Dog and sent him to the point.

As the slave boy, with No Flesh bounding at his heels, raced up, he stopped suddenly. His master's eyes were swollen with weeping.

The boy asked: "Blackrobe Master, your heart is sad?"

Marquette shook his head.

"Worlds apart from sadness, Crow Doggie."

He smiled down and changed the subject. "So here are my faithful hound and my more than faithful son! It is time to go back to the cabins, for we start early for this portage that will lead us quickly to the Mission of Saint Francis Xavier."

The Blackrobe put his hand affectionately on the slave boy's shoulder and said: "Remember what that Peoria warrior told you. Listen attentively at the Mission and in due time I will pour the Saving Waters on your forehead and make you a follower of the Prayer. Come now and help me back to the cabins, for my strength is that of a papoose."

Slowly the Blackrobe, leaning on the proud shoulder of his slave boy, walked back from the point and left behind him the fading western skies.

In the gray dawn of the following morning the two canoes, with the escort Rushing Wind had furnished to show the portage into the lake, turned the point where the cross stood out prominently, and started up the River of the Illinois.

Marquette told Jean and René, who were at the paddles, to let the canoe drop behind.

The two green points closed in and the vast expanse of the River of the Conception was cut off; only visible was the wide tide and the dark bluff on the far shore.

Humbly the Blackrobe petitioned: "Mary Immaculate, guard this mighty stream. Send your chil-

dren Blackrobes more worthy than I, who in a better day will gather in that mighty harvest."

Marquette dipped his hand affectionately into the clear stream and, letting the water fall again, whispered: "O Mary Immaculate, Mother of God. Mother of Grace. Remember them."

Reluctantly he gave the order to paddle after the others who were far ahead.

The worn birchbark canoe, that was now symbolic of his own worn-out body, rounded into the first bend. The twin points closed in and the River of the Conception passed forever from the mortal eyes of its first Blackrobe.

It was the warm morning of August 3rd, 1673.

THE END

Printed by Benziger Brothers, New York

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KATERI TEKAKWITHA

„The Lily of the Mohawks"

ed in Holland

PRAYER FOR THE CANONIZATION OF VENERABLE KATERI TEKAKWITHA

„Lily of the Mohawks"

Born at Auriesville, N.Y., 1656
Baptized at Fonda, N.Y., 1676
Died at Caughnawaga, Canada,
April 17, 1680
Declared Venerable by Pope Pius XII
January 3, 1943.

O God, Who, among the many marvels of Thy grace in the New World, didst cause to blossom on the banks of the Mohawk and the St. Lawrence the pure and tender Lily, Kateri Tekakwitha, grant, we beseech Thee, what we ask: (here mention your petition) so that this little lover of Jesus and His Cross may soon be raised to the honors of the Altar by Holy Mother Church, and that our hearts may be enkindled with a stronger desire to imitate her innocence and her faith, through the same Christ Our Lord. Amen.

Imprimatur:
+ Most Reverend Edmund F. Gibbons, D.D.

IN YOUR KINDNESS REMEMBER THE
TEKAKWITHA INDIAN ORPHANS
AT SISSETON. So.Dak.